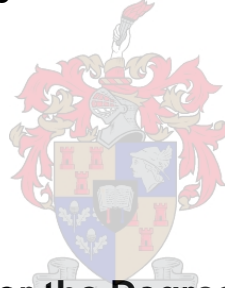


# **Revisiting the Use of Art, Imagery and Symbolism in the Presbyterian Liturgical Tradition in Korea: A Practical-theological Research**

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at the Faculty of theology, Stellenbosch University**

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## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## Abstract

Aesthetics has a theological calling: The beauty (or ugliness) in the world and art incites us to long for the divine eternal beauty. The earthly beauty is revelatory and analogous to the beauty of God. Imagination, i.e. making an image, whether mental or physical, is an inherent faculty of human beings who were created in the image of God. It is an insuppressible human activity. Besides, the search for meaning, which is a universal human quest for the purpose in life, is a concern common in both religion and art. Aesthetics (art and beauty) thereby should be a theological locus, a graceful partner of theological dialogue. But how much are aesthetic dimensions incorporated in the Korean Presbyterian theological/liturgical context?

Visual art, imagery and symbolism are considered marginal or even dangerous in the Korean Presbyterian churches while preaching is given a dominant position in their worship services. As a result, they are losing sight of the essential implications that aesthetic, embodied experiences of art, imagery and symbolism have for liturgical richness.

Art, imagery and symbolism are fundamental components in Christian life and worship as demonstrated with numerous evidences throughout the Christian history. They are never discordant with the tradition of the Word, but rather, have critical importance to theology for five reasons – the human as embodied being, a manifestation of *imago Dei*, the integrative characteristic of our thinking and perceiving, the Bible as book of images, and the contemporary culture of images. Against this backdrop, aesthetic expressions of art, imagery and symbolism are claimed to have five features significant to Christian worship: The revelatory power of the beauty in nature or works of art displays something of God; aesthetic expressions of art, imagery and symbolism speak to the human totality as an intelligent-affective-sensate-corporeal being; people necessarily become participants in the performative nature of art and its claim of truth; the beauty, truth and goodness manifested in works of art may be a reminder of our responsibility to work for the transformation of the world; an artwork can serve an eloquent mode of hoping for the

present absent reality of the Kingdom of God. In terms of these qualities, an implication that aesthetic experiences in worship have the power to reframe, taking us to the encounter with the divine beauty, goodness and truth, is drawn, and a fusion of the verbal and non-verbal is claimed conclusively.

## Opsomming

Estetika het 'n teologiese roeping: Die skoonheid (of lelikheid) in die wêreld en kuns moedig ons aan om na die goddelike ewige skoonheid te verlang. Die aardse skoonheid is openbarend en ooreenkomstig tot die skoonheid van God. Verbeelding, dit wil sê die maak van 'n beeld, óf dit geestelik of fisies is, is 'n inherente fakulteit van die mens wat in die beeld van God geskape is. Dit is 'n menslike aktiwiteit wat nie onderdruk kan word nie. Buitendien, die soeke na betekenis, wat 'n universele menslike soektog na die doel van die lewe is, is 'n belangstelling wat algemeen in godsdiens en kuns voorkom. Estetika (kuns en skoonheid) moet daarmee 'n teologiese lokus wees, 'n bekoorlike vennoot in die teologiese dialoog. Hoeveel van estetiese dimensies word egter in die Koreaanse Presbiteriaanse teologiese / liturgiese konteks opgeneem?

Visuele kuns, beelde en simboliek word as marginaal of selfs gevaarlik in die Koreaanse Presbiteriaanse kerke beskou, terwyl prediking 'n dominante posisie in hul eredienste beklee. Die gevolg is dat die belangrikste implikasies wat die estetiese, beliggaamde ervarings wat kuns, beelde en simboliek vir liturgiese rykdom inhou, uit die oog verloor word.

Kuns, beelde en simboliek is fundamentele komponente van die Christelike lewe en aanbidding soos verskeie getuienis in die Christelike geskiedenis demonstreer. Hulle is nooit teenstrydig met die tradisie van die Woord nie, maar dit is eerder van kardinale belang vir die teologie vir vyf redes – die mens as beliggaamde wese; 'n manifestasie van die *Imago Dei*; die geïntegreerde kenmerk van ons denke en waarneming; die Bybel as boek van beelde, en die huidige kontemporêre kultuur van beelde. Die estetiese uitdrukking van kuns, beelde en simboliek besit op hierdie gronde vyf eienskappe van belang vir die Christelike aanbidding naamlik: Die openbarende krag van skoonheid in die natuur of kunswerke wat iets van God vertoon; die estetiese uitdrukking van kuns, beelde en simboliek praat tot die menslike totaliteit as 'n intelligente-affektiewe-sintuiglik-waarnemende-liggaamlike wese; mense word noodsaaklike deelnemers in die performatiewe aard van kuns en

sy eis van die waarheid; die skoonheid, waarheid en goedheid wat in kunswerke te sien is, kan vir ons tot 'n herinnering wees van ons verantwoordelikheid om vir die transformasie van die wêreld te werk; 'n kunswerk kan as 'n welsprekende beeld van hoop vir die hede dien in die afwesige werklikheid van die Koninkryk van God. Die implikasie van die mag om verandering te weeg te bring wat estetiese ervarings in aanbidding mag hê, word volgens hierdie eienskappe veronderstel. Dit neem ons na 'n ontmoeting met die goddelike skoonheid, goedheid en waarheid en die samesmelting van die verbale en nieverbale word gevolglik opgeëis.

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Background and motivation of the research**

The Korean Presbyterian churches have many worship services a week. On Sunday morning and afternoon, on Wednesday evening, Friday evening, and early every morning throughout the week, they have worship services. Yet, that they have so many worship services has nothing to do with the extent of their liturgical richness. Ironically, the liturgical development of the Korean Presbyterian churches has rather been very poor, even if they are famous for their frequent worship services.

The use of art, imagery and symbolism in worship is one of the liturgical aspects which the Korean Presbyterian churches need to develop. By and large, Korean Presbyterian ministers' interest in worship has been focused on preaching. They regard preaching as the most important part of the worship service and recognize it as a superior, if not exclusive, means to communicate truth in their worship. In short, preaching dominates worship in the Korean Presbyterian liturgical tradition and practices. As a result, the Korean Presbyterian churches are struggling with the depression of worship services. Their worship, which depends mostly on preaching and its auditory way of communication, is failing to engage congregants in a holistic experience of worship and is also miscarrying the encounter with God. The consequence is that people are drifting away from the worship services and the church.

While studying in South Africa, I have had the opportunity to study the liturgical use of art, imagery and symbolism, which is unfamiliar and very much unacquainted to the Korean Presbyterian churches. Reading some materials about the subject, my first impression was that art, imagery and symbolism have not been part of the Korean liturgical history, and that this is a new territory to them. Although there might be fear and alarm in going into an unknown land, I believe that art/aesthetics can be a significant help to the problematic situation of the Korean Presbyterian worship. Thus, I am about to challenge them to undertake an adventure in a new field with

this study.

## 1.2. Problem statement

Preaching is the focal point of the Korean Presbyterian worship. Park (June 2008) states that there are two main streams of worship services in Korea, specifically 'traditional worship' and '열린 예배'.<sup>1</sup> Commenting on the common feature of the two worship styles, he states that they share the same focus, that is, the dominance of preaching. With all their differences – music, style, mood, the order, etc., both the traditional worship and the open worship accentuate at the culmination of worship one liturgical aspect – the sermon. This sermon-dominancy causes four challenges for the Korean Presbyterian worship as follows:

### 1.2.1. The predominance of verbal communication in worship

The Korean Presbyterian worship services have depended particularly on verbal communication, and they therefore fail to appreciate the value of non-verbal communication, *inter alia*, visual communication. The Korean Presbyterian churches have attached great importance to preaching (Jang September 2006; Kim 30 September 2005; Lee 14 July 2004). Obviously, the sense of hearing and the function of speaking have an exclusive importance in communicating the message of the Christian truth in their sermon-dominant worship (Cheon 1997:6; cf. Park 2003:47-49).

The sense of hearing receives much emphasis and attention in the Korean

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<sup>1</sup> In using the word 'traditional' here, Park does not mean the tradition of the early Christianity, which had the dual focus of Word and Sacrament in worship. Rather, he refers to the tradition of the non-liturgical side of the Reformation, especially that of the Reformed strand in which the sermon was the kernel of its liturgical reformation from the Middle Ages. The Korean Presbyterian churches have succeeded this Reformed tradition. The factors that have influenced the formation of the Korean Presbyterian liturgy will be discussed further in 2.2.

A literal translation of '열린 예배' is 'open worship'. Hereafter, it will be called open worship. It is the Korean modification of the seeker service in the U.S. Compared with the 'traditional' form of worship, it characterizes the adoption of the contemporary Christian music, a simpler form and a freer atmosphere. It has risen in the name of the cultural adaptation of worship in Korea. The open worship style is advocated against a backdrop of the critique that the traditional worship is out-of-date and does not fit the free and dynamic culture of the contemporary age.

Presbyterian worship. Because most transmissions of messages or teachings of the Christian truth are done by way of preaching or verbal explanation, the sense of hearing becomes the main receptive faculty. Concerning such a situation in the Korean Presbyterian worship, however, it should be said that the sense of hearing is not the only sense that human beings have. Although its importance for our daily interaction cannot be ignored, it is just one of the five senses that constitute the whole of our receptive faculties. Through our senses, we perceive and experience the world around us and communicate with the outer world. Especially, the sense of sight is one through which we perceive a lot of information every day. For the critical importance and influence of the visual sense, it would suffice to say that we are influenced immensely by what we see, no matter whether we are aware of it or not. For example, people are influenced by television commercials and children imitate the characters they see on video or computer games. The sense of vision is vital to our lives and worship experience. Witvliet, in Jensen (2004:vi), argues for the indispensability of the sense of sight and visual means as follows:

Christian worship is aided immeasurably by our sense of sight. In worship, we see each other and gain a glimpse of what it means to be the body of Christ. In worship, we are privileged to see beautiful and thought-provoking – or at least well-intentioned – expressions in fabric, wood, stone, and light. ... For better or worse, our buildings unveil implicit assumptions about God and the church, and attitudes toward culture and the nature of worship. Even iconoclastic Puritan traditions practiced worship that was sight-full, constructing buildings for worship that spoke an eloquent visual language of luminous simplicity.

Life and worship are unimaginable without visual factors. They have a great impact on our thinking and behavior because a large amount of information is perceived through the sense of vision and the beauty (or ugliness) of visual images leaves an undeniable impression that lasts in our mind. In liturgical terms, we could say, indeed, that 'seeing does affect believing'. Visual art, images and symbols not only stimulate our thoughts, but also form our faith. Visual factors in worship can be an effective means to convey a Christian message and to experience God's truth. The following observation of Jensen (2004:3), illustrates the power of visual images to draw our

attention:

They attract, repel, or puzzle. Unbidden by us, they may call attention: they “catch our eye.” Sometimes we seek *them* out. Philosophers and theologians from Plato onward have known that we are drawn to the beautiful, delighted and shaped by our encounter with it, just as we are drawn to the curious, the ugly, and the grotesque. Whether what we see pleases, disturbs, calms, or delights, an apparently inanimate object can have an enormous magnetic power.

Another challenge resulting from the verbal-centered worship in Korea is being possessed by speaking. At present, we are living in a society that suffers from noise pollution and, *inter alia*, the most serious noise is our words (Cilliers 2008:20). Words are facing a crisis today, because we overuse them to the extent that they lose their novelty and significance. They are becoming cliché, which is the opposite of silence. Words disconnected from silence no longer bear any power because “Silence bestows form and meaning upon language” (Cilliers 2008:26-27).

The Reformed tradition is often driven by words (Cf. Dyrness 2001:13). The Korean Presbyterian churches are never out of this line. Alongside the sermon as the focal point of worship, 통성기도 (the fervent prayer, if translated in English) also can be an example of the Korean Presbyterian churches’ word-drivenness. It is usually known as the ‘Korean style of prayer’, in which people pray together in a loud voice. Even if there are diverse styles of prayer, the fervent prayer is often preferred in the Korean churches, and further, approved as a sign of piety. Word-drivenness in the churches could be seen as a cause thereof that congregants do not heed the words of preaching. The church, specifically the Reformed church of the present day, needs to appreciate the liturgical implications of silence.<sup>2</sup> The encounter with God is an experience that makes us speechless. We cannot but be silent before God and silence often becomes a clearer and more expressive language of worship than

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<sup>2</sup> Cilliers (2008:19) mentions the following four liturgical implications of the phenomenon of silence: “the need for silence in Reformed liturgies, the need for liturgists being formed ethically and aesthetically by silence, the need for a new, contextual word being created out of silence and the necessity of understanding liturgy holistically, as verbal and non-verbal event”.

spoken words (Cilliers 2009a:37-38).

Silence takes us to the origin of existence. It creates a space in our inner being and puts the most basic questions for meaning. In silence, we struggle to find the hidden God, waiting for his answers (Cilliers 2008:25). Visual art, images and symbols are often proper means to create this silence for us. Viewing works of art, we have experiences indescribable with our stammering words.

### **1.2.2. The intellectualism of worship**

As another consequence of the overemphasis on sermon, the Korean Presbyterian worship services have a cerebral disposition. Because of their focus on the intellectual communication of preaching, the approach of the Korean Presbyterian worship services hardly recognizes the significance of the body and the wholeness of a person (Kim 16 January 2003; Kim 2001:282; Kim 28 March 2005). They convey information, rather than elicit experience, put more emphasis on learning than on an encounter with God and are more interested in making people understand the Christian doctrines than in leading them to the mysterious God.

However, worship should be a holistic experience that includes our embodiment and engages our whole personality. The formation of faith and the transformation of life through a worship experience should entail the obedience of will and the purification of emotion, as well as being persuaded intellectually and the improvement in knowledge of God. This transformation is brought about through the medium of our body. Listen to what Hovda (1996:92) remarks in relation to the holistic approach to worship and the implication that art has for it:

We are not dealing with mere “souls” any more ... but whole human beings – each with body, senses, sex, memory, imagination, all of which function as one person, whose faith orientation must be whole. Such a faith experience must leave no human faculty untouched, no agency of reason or will unmoved. Worship, environment and the arts not only have the keys to all the human parts that our capitalist, pragmatic and scientific culture has neglected; they also communicate with a power least easily eroded by differences of place and time.

Art, imagery and symbolism are effective means to involve the various senses of the body and to affect the whole being of a person (Cf. Babin 1991:111). In an act of looking at a work of art or visually presentative symbolism, people are engaged not only with their rationality, but also with their sensibility. Consider the Sacraments, for instance, which are the representative symbolic rites of Christianity. In the celebration of the Sacraments, believers respond to God's grace emotionally, volitionally and intellectually when they take the physical elements of bread and wine and go under the water of Baptism (Dyrness 2001:22). They feel the message that the symbolism embodies through their senses, and cherish it in their hearts.

The physical body, as an integral part of our whole being, has great implications for our worship and life. Yet, because of two extreme views on the body in history, our recognition of the body has been distorted: Until the advent of modern society, Platonism has influenced Christian theology, to such an extent that the body was neglected and the mind accentuated. In the postmodern society, on the contrary, the body is idolized by the mass media (Cilliers 2009b:60).

The body must be pondered with care in our theological undertaking because of the following reasons: Firstly, it is a structure of existence of every human being. Secondly, the church is called the body of Christ. Thirdly, the body of Christ was broken for our healing (Cilliers 2009b:61). Thus, the body is nothing to be disregarded; it is an entity that is approved by the Trinitarian life of God – the creation of God, the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit (Cilliers 2009b:53).

In our worship experience, the use of art, imagery and symbolism could be an affirmation of our embodiment. Compared with sermon-centered worship, which appeals chiefly to the intellect, visual art, images and symbols stimulate the emotions and will, as well as the intellect, through the various senses of the body. In the symbolism of the Holy Communion, we participate in the broken body of Christ by seeing bread being broken and wine being poured. Furthermore, the Sacrament also gives an implication that we are participating in the body of Christ, that is, the church.



On top of all these, a worship experience itself is unimaginable without each person's bodily presence. The body plays a fundamental role in our worship experience.

### **1.2.3. Detachment of the congregation**

Thirdly, the sermon-dominant worship of the Korean Presbyterian churches often fails to engage congregants, because it leaves very little room for them to participate (Kim 29 November 2001). The sermon-dominant worship has a uni-directional flow from the preacher to the congregation, in which the congregation becomes nothing more than the audience. The most that the congregation does is just to sit and listen to the words of a preacher. Concerning this matter, the open worship has claimed that it does better than the traditional worship, but consequently the claim has proved to be wrong. Even though the open worship is a try to involve congregants in worship by allowing them more time to sing together, it has not broken through the passive status of congregants and their alienation from worship activities. Worshippers become spectators, just watching the worship team's performance in such worship, too.

In this respect, a symbolic liturgy of communal performance should be revisited in the Korean Presbyterian worship. Liturgy is fundamentally a form of communal commitment to God (Allen, Jr. 1996:8-9). The Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, for instance, are the representative 'work of the people'. In the rite of Baptism, congregants are confirmed repeatedly with the fact that they are "those who have gone through the waters of death and resurrection and been united to Christ" (White 1981:82). When partaking in the communal meal of the Holy Communion, each individual is reminded that he or she is united with other believers in Christ. In the Sacraments, congregants are not just spectators, but active participants, because the sacramental liturgies demand that they play a subjective role in acts such as serving, sharing, eating, helping and responding.

### **1.2.4. The infrequent celebration of the Eucharist**

The fourth challenge resulting from the Korean Presbyterian churches' sermon-

centered worship is the infrequent celebration of the Eucharist (Joo September 2006; Kim 2001:309). Some of them have quarterly celebration of the Eucharist as their tacit regulation, referring to Calvin's practice,<sup>3</sup> and others hold the Eucharist twice a year for practical reasons. Indeed, the feeble practice of the Eucharist in comparison with dominant preaching characterizes the Korean Presbyterian worship, and this is even reflected in the setting of the worship space. The pulpit, signifying that preaching is the unrivaled focus of worship, is set at the center of the front platform in the church. The Eucharistic altar is placed in a lower place or in a corner. The baptismal font is even more inconspicuous. In most Korean Presbyterian churches, you would hardly find the baptismal font or basin displayed. All of these demonstrate that the Korean Presbyterian churches are not appreciating the Sacraments enough in their worship.

Alongside preaching, the Eucharist, in particular, needs to be restored as one of two posts of worship in the Korean Presbyterian churches. Most Presbyterian churches in Korea fail to consider the Eucharist as part of the worship service on a regular basis, i.e. every Sunday. However, as we all know, the early Christian church celebrated the Eucharist every Sunday, along with the delivery of the sermon. The early church regarded the Eucharist (the visible Word of God) and preaching (the audible Word of God) as equally important facets of worship. The Eucharist consists of four central actions – taking, giving thanks (blessing), breaking and giving (White 1981:208). In these symbolic actions, the event of offering of Jesus himself and his dying for us is re-enacted. The physical elements of bread and wine are of special significance to believers. Though the Eucharistic bread and wine do not have spiritual power in themselves, they play a role as a gateway to experiencing the mystery of God. When worshippers see bread being broken, smell the fragrance of wine and taste them, they feel God's presence and meditate on his grace (Lee 23 April 2007; cf. also Senn 1996:15-16). Thus, the Eucharist could act as a transformative power in believers by engaging multiple senses. It makes it possible for worshippers to 'sense' the transcendent reality of God which linguistic

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<sup>3</sup> Calvin contended for practicing the Eucharist on a regular basis of every Sunday worship service. However, the Council of Geneva objected to Calvin's argument, with the result that the Eucharist was practiced only four times a year.

communication is deficient to express occasionally:

In the sacraments we 'see' the connections between our faith, our senses and our existential questions concerning the meaning of life, or put in other words: the theology and praxis of the sacraments make manifest the sensorial and supra-sensorial, as well as the existential dimensions of our faith. In the sacraments we have symbols that strongly cry out for sensory exploration and utilisation, symbols that can help us not only to celebrate creation, but also salvation and anticipation of the summation, the ultimate triumph of God's beauty, goodness and truth (Cilliers 2011b:2)

Hitherto, the Korean Presbyterian churches' concern and controversy about worship have centered mainly on an acceptance or a rejection of the open worship mentioned above, that is, whether they should preserve the long-standing tradition or follow the contemporary trend of free style of worship. In the meanwhile, the issue of the use of art, imagery and symbolism in worship has hardly been paid attention. Because the Korean Presbyterian churches have been influenced strongly by the iconoclastic Puritan tradition and identified visual artworks and imagery with idols, they have consistently prohibited such.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, very little literature on this issue is available in Korean.

Even as a proof of their negative point of view on the visual, many Korean Presbyterian denominations recommended their local churches not to hang up the crucifix in their worship space, for the reason of the danger of idolatry. The worship space of the Korean Presbyterian churches, which are controlled by the sermon-biased ideology, gives people the impression that the verbal communication of preaching has a dominant, exclusive importance in conveying the Christian truths. However, language is not enough to express an ineffable experience; it has limits. Visual art, imagery and symbolism speak more clearly sometimes. Although these visual means may have limitations, they work in a different way from preaching. They

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<sup>4</sup> I do not exclude here the possibility that visual media are playing their part in some local churches in Korea. For example, video clips, slides of images, etc. are being used in practice. However, many of the images displayed in the churches often tend to be nothing but kitsch that is illustrative with little spiritual, intellectual or artistic courage, imagination, skill or insight. Neither challenging, engaging, nor truly beautiful, these images may be seen one minute and forgotten the next. Images created by poor vision contain an equally poor theology.

permit us to perceive and experience, while the verbal explanation of preaching helps us to understand. Therefore, we need both (Cf. Dyrness 2001:156; Wheeler 2003:362).

### **1.3. The aim of the research**

The aim of this research is to rediscover the value that visual art, imagery and symbolism have for the communication of truth and faith in Christian worship and to maintain the validity that they have, specifically for the Korean Presbyterian liturgical context. While the Korean Presbyterian churches have overemphasized the verbal communication of preaching until now, a discussion on the non-verbal communication of visual art, imagery and symbolism in worship is strongly required in the Presbyterian liturgical context of Korea. Christianity is, of course, the religion of the Word, and therefore, the verbal communication has been dominant and has been emphasized with an exclusive importance. Yet the Bible shows us that visualization is also the method by which God, along with verbalization, revealed Himself. Thus, I will deal with visual issues of art, imagery and symbolism and will emphasize their utilization in worship services of the Korean Presbyterian churches.

In the meanwhile, however, I do not intend to challenge or compromise the value of the verbal (or preaching), because it constitutes part of the ways of our existence, communication, and experience in worship. Rather, I intend not only to recognize and claim the importance of the creative imagination and beauty as revealed in doing theology through images, but to actively uncover, discover, appreciate and use art, imagery and symbols as a source of deepening and broadening the experience of God. Images complement words. Ultimately, a balanced understanding and fusion of verbal and non-verbal means of communication should be recommended for the Korean Presbyterian worship.

### **1.4. Hypothesis**

- By engaging the various senses, do the non-verbal features of art, imagery and symbolism make us experience the Christian truths that are occasionally

deficient for preaching to communicate verbally?

- By appealing not only to the intellect, but to the wholeness of a person including emotion and will, does the use of art, imagery and symbolism make it possible to overcome dualistic spiritualism and a negative attitude towards the physical body, which easily infiltrate the sermon-dominant worship?
- Does the symbolism of the Sacraments involve the congregation in worship more than the sermon-biased worship?
- Does the double-pivoted worship of Word and Eucharist work with more transformative power than the sermon-dominant worship?

## 1.5. Methodology for this study

In order to carry out the research, I will adopt Richard Osmer's practical theological methodology. In his book, *Practical theology: An introduction*, he articulates four tasks, viz. the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative and the pragmatic tasks, which constitute the basic structure of a practical theological methodology (Osmer 2008:x).

In the first phase, namely the *descriptive-empirical task*, the key question is what is going on. In order to find an answer to it, we gather "information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts" (Osmer 2008:4). This research deals specifically with the sermon-dominant worship and its consequences in the Korean Presbyterian liturgical context. Data regarding how much preaching is being counted in the Korean Presbyterian worship services will be collected from existing surveys conducted by Christian institutions in Korea. They will serve as indirect indicators of the extent to which the Korean Presbyterian churches are appreciating art, imagery and symbolism in their liturgical practices.

Secondly, the key question of the *interpretive task* is why something is taking place. In this phase, we draw on "theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring" (Osmer 2008:4). Reality in a certain context is composed of different structures, properties and complexities, which are interconnected. To interpret this complex reality of a context, we need an

interdisciplinary approach (Osmer 2008:118-119). For this task, therefore, I will conduct an investigation into the church history of Korea and will identify the past and recent influences on the Korean Presbyterian liturgical tradition which have shaped the present sermon-dominant worship.

In the *normative task*, we ask the question, what ought to be going on? Theological concepts are used in this phase to interpret an examined context and to construct norms to guide our responses. Osmer (2008:163) states that “practical theology as an academic field and practical theological interpretation ... are inherently cross-disciplinary in nature”. To develop a constructive theological perspective, practical theology dialogues with other theological disciplines and the arts and social sciences. Thus, for this point, I will adopt theological aesthetics as a constructive alternative norm, which considers the significance of using visual art, imagery and symbolism for Christian worship. After discussing the historical development of art/aesthetics in Christian church, I will introduce aesthetics as a theological locus, delving into why it is important for theology and some principal concepts and qualities of it.

Finally, the *pragmatic task* of practical theological methodology is to form strategies of action that will influence the situation or context in ways that are desirable (Osmer 2008:175-176). In this regard, I will propose, along the line of four classic movements of Christian worship, instances of imaginative artworks and symbolic liturgies that might be helpful for the Korean Presbyterian churches to overcome the problems aforementioned and cultivate a more holistic and balanced worship.

## **1.6. The delimitation**

Firstly, the scope of this research is limited to the Korean Presbyterian context, because it is my personal background of faith and one in which I serve. Contrary to the Lutheran and Anglican churches in Korea, which represent more ritualistic side of Protestantism and are open-minded to various liturgical elements, the Korean Presbyterian churches are indifferent to or suspicious about visual art, images and symbols.

Secondly, the meaning of the term 'art' in this study is limited to any visual object or production by an artist who is not necessarily a professionally trained one, but possibly an amateur. Therefore, the word 'art' does not include auditory art such as music.

## 1.7. Brief chapter overview

This dissertation comprises subsequent chapters as follows:

Chapter 2 will provide the proofs of the sermon-dominancy of the Korean Presbyterian churches' worship by highlighting some Korean authors' remarks and existing surveys. Then, several influences of the past and the recent that have shaped the Korean Presbyterian liturgical tradition will be clarified as foreign missionaries from Scotland and America; the Nevius Method; the Great Revivals in Korea; seeker service.

In chapter 3, after definitions of some central terms are given, the place of art/aesthetics in Christian history will be researched according to segments of the times. From the historical survey, it becomes clear that art, images and symbols have existed from the beginning of the church with an inherent right.

Chapter 4 will include discussions of aesthetics as a theological locus: Initially, the question of why aesthetics is important for theology, or why theology should appreciate and have a dialogue with aesthetics will be answered in terms of five arguments – the human as embodied being, a manifestation of *imago Dei*, the integrative characteristic of our thinking and perceiving, the Bible as book of images, and the contemporary culture of images. Then, three essential concepts of theological aesthetics – beauty, imagination and meaning – will be examined. These concepts are chosen according to three scholars who drew the first outlines of theological aesthetics, i.e. Gerardus van der Leeuw (imagination), Paul Tillich (meaning) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (beauty). Cilliers integrates the concepts of these three scholars and proposes 'the beauty of imagined meaning' as his model. Lastly, five characteristics of artistic beauty and expression will be enumerated as

revelatory, holistic, participatory, transformative and anticipatory. In terms of these qualities, art and beauty would be claimed to have theological, liturgical implications.

Chapter 5 will cover suggestions for the Korean Presbyterian worship. In order to make it more generally applicable to the Presbyterian churches in Korea, regardless of the size, the situation, financial affordability, or others, the suggestions will be made according to four basic structures of worship – gathering to serve God, the ministry of the Word, the ministry of the Sacrament and being dismissed to serve the world.

Then, lastly, summaries and conclusions will be given in chapter 6.



## **2. Worship in the Korean Presbyterian context**

Preaching is a dominant order of the Korean Presbyterian worship. It is accepted as a supreme means of communicating the Christian truths and constitutes virtually the core part of worship of the Korean Presbyterian churches. They grant great priority to the ministry of the Word in designing and practicing their worship services. Preaching takes the most length of time in worship and the other elements of worship seem to be peripheral as these are thought to support preaching, the main feature of worship. With respect to the Eucharist, the case does not seem to be very different from the other elements. The Sacrament is regarded as just a visual display to reinforce preaching. Relating to the frequency, the ministry of the Table is not included in every Sunday worship service in the Korean Presbyterian tradition. The Presbyterian churches in Korea normally celebrate the Eucharist two or four times a year. Hereof, the dominance of sermon in the Korean Presbyterian liturgical context will be proved in this chapter, when I refer to some scholastic voices and survey data. Furthermore, I will investigate the Korean Presbyterian history and identify four landmarks that have influenced the present liturgical poverty in the Korean Presbyterian churches.

### **2.1. The reality of the sermon-dominant worship in the Korean Presbyterian churches**

As a voice calling attention to the sermon-dominance, Moon points it out as a cause provoking some problems of the Korean worship services:

Worship services, in the Korean churches, are dominated by sermon. The worship service exists for the sermon rather than vice versa. Parishioners go to church to listen to the sermon, not to worship God. ... One of the problems in the contemporary Korean churches is that the sermon and the preacher have become the center of worship service. Other worship leaders like lector, the person who does public prayer and choir play as preliminaries to the sermon, the leading part of a worship service. The preacher is the hero of a worship service. ... The Korean churches have lost the communal celebration of worship which was one of the most important aspects of the

early church's worship. They follow ... elitism. Congregants become not participants but spectators in their worship (Translated by the researcher. Moon 13 April 2005).

The dominance of sermon is a representative feature of the Korean worship services. It not only breaks the balance among the various parts of a worship service, Moon contends, but also becomes a cause to uninvolved congregation. Jeong (1993:50-51) also critiques the sermon-dominant worship in the Korean churches as follows:

Simply speaking, the Korean churches' worship service is conventionally sermon-dominant. It is not only the case of the Presbyterian churches, but also of most of the Protestant churches that follow the tradition of the Reformation (the Methodist, the Holiness, the Baptist churches, etc.).

... In most Presbyterian churches of Korea, the order of worship is organized to focus on preaching. ... Much of the time in worship is assigned to preaching.

Although a worship service should be based on the Word of God, it does not mean that a worship service should be centered on a sermon. Liturgical problems occur when a sermon itself represents a worship service. A current problem is that a sermon is considered to be equal to the whole of a worship service (Translated by the researcher).

Jeong (1993:51-53) describes the Korean churches' worship with two more characteristics, which are closely relevant to the sermon-dominancy: Firstly, the Korean churches do not do justice to the Eucharist in their worship, so that they have lost the balance between the Word and the Eucharist. Secondly, the Korean churches' worship is clergy-centered. In a sermon-biased worship, the preacher is the hero and the congregation becomes the passive audience, even though a worship service should be a communal event, in which all the believers stand before God and worship Him together. The sermon-dominancy has been accountable to the Korean churches' failure in taking on the communal character of worship.

Kim is another scholar who notes the sermon-dominancy and the relevant problems alike. According to him (Kim 1995:65), the Korean churches' worship is under the control of the clergy for the most part and it is overtly oriented to preaching. The

Korean believers have come to regard a worship service as listening to a sermon, because the Eucharist is celebrated at rare occasions and a sermon plays a major part of their worship. They normally think of other parts of a worship service as simply preliminaries to the sermon.

The sermon, indeed, is considered as the most vital part of church ministry by Korean ministers. Peeh (6 December 2010) emphasizes that preaching is a mainstay of a church. He states that without good preaching, the entire ministry cannot be successful, even though other pastoral works are good enough. Preaching, according to him, is the key factor of the entire church ministry. Seo (11 February 2009) also retains the same opinion. He stresses that preaching is the most important part of church ministry and if a minister is not good in preaching, he or she would not be successful in his or her entire ministry (Cf. Choi October 2002; Pyo 23 September 2008).

In addition to the personal statements above, survey data also indicate that Korean ministers appreciate preaching to a great extent.

A Korean theological journal *목회와 신학* (*The pastoral ministry and theology*) researched the Korean Protestant ministers' awareness of preaching in 2003 and 2007. In both surveys, two questions that are worth being noted for this research are included. The first one is "How much importance does preaching have in your ministry?" To this question, 86.5 percent of respondents answered "very important" and 13.5 percent "important" in the 2003 survey. None of the respondents chose "a little important" or "not important" (Park April 2003).<sup>5</sup> In the 2007 survey, the question was slightly changed to "Has the importance of preaching increased comparing with the past?" but the intention of the question is basically the same as the case in 2003. It wants to determine how much the Korean Protestant ministers consider the role of preaching in their ministry. To the question in 2007, 75.5 percent

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<sup>5</sup> Outline of this survey: 1) survey area: South Korea; 2) survey subject: 500 Protestant pastors regardless of the denomination; 3) sampling method: random; 4) method of survey: questionnaire; 5) survey period: 2003.1.13-14; 6) 330 questionnaires have been collected ( $\pm 60\%$ ); 297 valid questionnaires are the source of these statistics.

replied “It has become more important than in the past” and 19.2 percent answered “It is as important as in the past” (Kim April 2007).<sup>6</sup> From the data of these two surveys, it can be said that almost all Korean Protestant ministers regard preaching as important to their ministry and they think its importance is increasing as time goes on. During the past four decades, the Korean churches have been through a drastic liturgical change, viz. the surge of the open worship and the increase of the role of contemporary Christian music in a worship service. At first sight, the new trend of worship seemed to substitute music for the position of sermon in a worship service. However, as demonstrated in the statistical data, preaching has never lost its primacy. It became ever more influential in the Korean churches.

The second question included in both surveys in common is “How much influence does preaching have for the maturity of a church community?” To this question, 32.3 percent replied “absolutely big” and 61.7 percent “big” in the 2003 survey. In the 2007 survey, 76.8 percent answered “very much influential” and 21.5 percent “influential”. These data verifies that most of the Korean Protestant ministers consider preaching to be a critical part for the life and maturity of a church community. The sermon has been reckoned traditionally to be a primary means for communicating the truths of Christianity in the Korean Protestant churches. It is an unchallengeable order of worship to them, to discipline and to educate people with the Word of God.

As another statistical evidence of the sermon-dominancy of the Korean Presbyterian worship services, I would like to present survey results about the liturgical and homiletical circumstances, particularly of the Korean Presbyterian Church (Tonghap), which is one of the major Presbyterian denominations in Korea.<sup>7</sup> In the survey, 79 percent of respondents answered the question “What is the central order of a

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<sup>6</sup> Outline of this survey: 1) survey area: South Korea; 2) survey subject: 578 Protestant pastors regardless of the denomination; 3) sampling method: systematic random sampling; 4) method of survey: phone, fax and internet; 5) survey period: 2007.1.22-2.5; 6) standard error:  $\pm 3.9\%$  (95% trust level)

<sup>7</sup> Outline of this survey: 1) survey area: South Korea; 2) survey subject: 1000 Presbyterian believers (Tonghap); 3) sampling method: random; 4) method of survey: questionnaire; 5) 600 questionnaires have been collected ( $\pm 60\%$ ), which are the source of these statistics.

worship service?”, by stating that preaching is the central order of a worship service. In addition, 72.5 percent replied that a worship service is the prime function of a church as answer to the question “What is the prime function of a church?” From the survey results, it is ascertained that a great number of Presbyterians in Korea think a worship service to be an important locus for the Christian life and a church community. However, it is also demonstrated that their understanding of a worship service is biased towards preaching (Kim *et al* 2006:679). Here, the 79 percent of replies on the centrality of preaching in a worship service is a meaningful indicator of the sermon-dominant reality of the Korean Presbyterian worship in general. Especially when considering that the Korean Presbyterian Church (Tonghap) is a denomination that is more active in liturgical renewal than most other Presbyterian denominations in Korea, it is supposed that most other Korean Presbyterian denominations would show stronger inclination to the sermon-dominancy of worship.

Three surveys present empirical data for the absolute patronage and centrality of sermon in the Korean Presbyterian worship. Moreover, in an indirect manner, they imply the Korean Presbyterian churches’ disinterest in varieties of liturgies. Visual elements such as art, imagery and symbolism, thereof, have not been thought about much, and questions like the theological implications that art, images and beauty have or their liturgical use have not even been asked. Surely, the Korean Presbyterian churches do not involve art, imagery and symbolism in their worship properly, just as it is typical to the Reformed churches.

The Korean Presbyterian churches are in line with the Reformed tradition. The stand of the Reformed churches on visual art, imagery and symbolism has been indifferent or negative because of their iconoclastic tendency. *Sola Scriptura* was the emblematic slogan of the Reformation, and the Reformed Christians themselves were proud of being the people of the Word. However, it developed the Reformed worship into an unbalanced sermon-centered direction. As the development in liturgy erupted in the twentieth century since the Second Vatican Council, the Reformed scholars began to comment on the weaknesses the sermon-dominant worship of the Reformed tradition has. In response to the critique, the most of the Reformed churches in the Western world have tried to conceive the importance of various

liturgical elements for a balanced and holistic worship. Yet the Korean Presbyterian churches are still poor in envisaging diverse elements of liturgy including visual art, imagery and symbolism. Because their liturgical concern and discussion is mainly focused on preaching, they do not have richness in their liturgy. The sermon is, needless to say, an important feature in a worship service. However, it is not the be all and end all of a worship service. The sermon is no more than a part done in a broader picture of a worship service. Worship is a holistic response of a church community to God's salvific work. The Korean Presbyterian churches need to comprehend that there are many liturgical channels besides preaching, by which God meets people. If such a balanced understanding is obtained, the role of preaching in worship context also would become richer than ever.

## **2.2. The formation of the Korean Presbyterian liturgical tradition: The past and recent influences**

### **2.2.1. Foreign missionaries from Scotland and America**

The first momentous figure for the formation of the early Protestant churches in Korea is the foreign missionaries. In terms of liturgy, the first Presbyterian faith community and worship for Koreans started in Manchuria in China by two Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, John Ross and John MacIntyre. In 1879, four Koreans, who were helping the missionaries translate the Bible into Korean, were baptized by John MacIntyre for the first time, and a Korean community in which more than 30 Koreans gathered regularly to study the Bible was founded. These Korean Christians disseminated the Gospels and Christian tracts in Korea, with the consequence that some faith communities were established in Korea by Korean Christians themselves, even before the first missionary came into the country in 1884 (Kim 1999:24-30).

The liturgical legacy that the Scottish missionaries in Manchuria handed down to Korea is the Word-centered practices. According to Ross' report, their ministry was concentrated on public preaching and Bible study. If there was someone who became interested in the Christianity by the public preaching, he or she was invited to come to evening worship, which was to instruct the Bible more intensively. The

Bible was the central point of their ministry and worship.

The missionaries in Manchuria introduced a very simple form of worship that consisted of three elements only – hymn singing, the Bible reading, and public prayer. Liturgies like the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed or doxologies were not used in the worship service (Joo & Kim 2006:485; Kim 1999:36-39). They streamlined a worship service by removing most of liturgies except singing hymns, prayer and preaching, and this simplified liturgy continued even after the Christianity was established more publicly (Ross 1903:45; 48-49).

The Scottish missionaries undeniably contributed to the budding-out of Christianity in Korea. However, a big stride of the Korean mission was made by American missionaries thereafter. They watered the seed of the gospel that the Scottish missionaries had planted in Korea. They played a major role in preaching the gospel to the people in Korea, as well as in establishing a theological foundation for the Korean church and training Korean ministers. After Horace N. Allen, the first American missionary came to Korea in 1884, many American missionaries followed. In reference to Clark's report, Kim (1999:169) states that "there were 226 Presbyterian missionaries officially working in Korea in 1918. Among them, 113 were American Presbyterians (Northern) (50%), 50 were American Presbyterians (Southern) (22%), 33 were Australian Presbyterians (15%), and 30 were Canadian Presbyterians (13%)". As shown, the American missionaries made up the majority of the foreign missionaries who were residents in Korea at that time. Naturally, their ideas and liturgical practices had much influence to Korean Christians.

The American missionaries practiced liturgies like Week of Prayer, Morning Prayer and Noon Prayer. Prayer is very conspicuous in their practices. Not only did they gather for prayer regularly in the morning and at noon, but they also practiced Week of Prayer from 1886, when it was not very long since they came to Korea. Week of Prayer was a revivalist liturgy, which was popular in America at that time. From the very first meeting, some Koreans joined in the prayer meeting and the Korean churches domesticated this. Later on, this prayer meeting was combined with Bible

study and played a role as an igniting place for the Revival of 1907 in the Korean churches (Kim 1999:47-48).

The American missionaries emphasized preaching along with prayer. Since the first seven Korean graduates of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Pyengyang were ordained in 1907, the missionaries began to encourage the native pastors to do an organized sermon in worship rather than a simple teaching. For instance, Clark<sup>8</sup> stated about the importance of a sermon as follows: “There are many important things such as leading the churches, singing hymns, teaching others, and visitation of the members. Among them, however, the sermon is the most important task” (Cited in Kim 1999:144). Thus, preaching began to dominate the liturgy of the Presbyterian churches in Korea as they were shaped into a denominational organization.

### **2.2.2. The Nevius Method**

The Nevius Method is another influence to the liturgical formation of the Korean churches. John L. Nevius, a Presbyterian missionary to China developed this Method, and the main ideas of the Method are encapsulated into three principles, i.e. self-support, self-propagation and self-government. These principles aim to maximize the initiative and participation of native people in the mission work, as Nevius (1895:60) states that “the extension of the church must depend mainly on the godly lives and voluntary activities of its members”. He opines that the missions would become more effective when native believers take the initiative, rather than when foreign missionaries take control of the native church and the mission field with foreign funds and foreign authorities (Nevius 1895:4). The missionaries in Korea were convinced that this Method would be helpful in Korean mission field, and therefore, they adopted the Method as their policy (Kim 1999:68).

The Nevius Method had a profound impact on the liturgical practices of the Korean

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<sup>8</sup> Clark worked as a professor in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Pyengyang for 36 years. He taught homiletics from 1908 and pastoral theology from 1917. In 1910, he published *강도요령* (*Homiletic lectures*) which was a translation from *Homiletic lectures* by Herrick Johnson (Kim 1999:140-141).



Presbyterian churches. In compliance with the emphasis on self-reliance, liturgical initiative was given to the local leaders, and in order to help them in leading worship, the Method provides the following concrete instructions: Firstly, Sunday worship service is to be normally administered by the native leaders of the local congregations. Secondly, a simple teaching of the Bible is recommended, rather than an organized preaching in a worship service because it may be difficult for the uneducated native leaders and the laity to practice an elaborate preaching. Nevius (1895:36) states that “A carefully prepared sermon from a trained native preacher or a foreign missionary, such a sermon as would be admirably suited to an intelligent educated Christian congregation, is out of place in a new station”. Thirdly, Nevius proposes a simple form of worship service in consideration of native leaders who might lack in theological knowledge. A suggested form of worship is as follows: “(1) Hymn singing (2) Prayer (3) Scripture reading (4) Prayers of the congregation (one or two among the congregation may pray) (5) Hymn singing (6) Teaching from the Bible (7) Prayer (8) Offering (9) Hymn singing” (Cited in Kim 1999:103-104).<sup>9</sup> It is noteworthy that even the orders like the Lord’s Prayer and Apostle’s Creed were not included in the worship form. Fourthly, Nevius advised to have Bible study classes. Initially, this Bible study program was intended for the leaders of local congregations, but sooner or later, it became open to all church members for the purpose of training them. The Bible study program had much importance, in the sense that it upholds the principle of self-reliance of the Method by educating the local leaders who do not have biblical knowledge very much. Thereby, Clark (1937:273) appreciated that “Without the Bible Class system, we doubt if the plan would be a success. Without it the group leaders would have no message after a few months of preaching, and there would be a starved church”.

In the Nevius Method, the Bible takes the principal position for worship and church life. Nevius suggested other Word-related activities such as informal Sunday school,

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<sup>9</sup> This form of worship appears in *위원입교인규조* (*Manual for catechumens*) which is a translation from *Manual for enquirers* written by Nevius. Though Nevius published *Manual for enquirers* in order to educate enquirers, it was also utilized to aid native leaders of local congregations, so that they could preside or lead congregations by themselves. They led worship services following the model and instructions in the book. *위원입교인규조* (*Manual for catechumens*) was generally used in the Korean churches until 1933 (Kim 1999:101-102).

Scripture story exercise and catechetical exercise, in addition to a simple form of worship revolving on the Bible teaching and the Bible study classes: In informal Sunday school, congregants did his or her individual study, whether it be memorizing verses, telling Bible stories, or studying the catechism or Scripture question books. In Scripture story exercise, attendees practiced to tell stories of the Bible. In catechetical exercise, people were educated with basic Christian truths from some passages or books of the Scripture, the Lord's prayer, the Ten Commandments, or some special subject such as the duty of benevolence, etc. (Nevius 1895:33). Thus, the Nevius Method put its emphasis on Word-centered practices.

### 2.2.3. The Revival Movement

Thirdly, the Revival Movement, which took place in Korea in 1907, also influenced the liturgical formation of the Korean Presbyterian churches. The Revival began with a prayer meeting. Mary Culler White and Louise Hoard McCully, two missionaries, started a meeting to pray that a revival would arise among the missionaries in Korea. Gradually, Arrena Carroll, Mary Knowles, Josephine C. Hounshell and other missionaries joined them, that the meeting became more expanded and enlivened. In 1903, Robert A. Hardie was invited as a guest speaker at the prayer meeting and he affected the missionaries greatly by confessing his inner most sin and pride. In 1906, Howard A. Johnston reported to Korean Christians and the missionaries that great revivals were emerging in India and Wales, and this made them hunger for a revival to happen in Korea even more. Finally, in January 1907, a revival in Korea took place at a rally for intensive Bible study and prayer in Pyengyang, which is called 사경회.<sup>10</sup> Blair (Blair & Hunt 1977:71-72) describes the scene as follows:

Just as on the day of Pentecost, they were all together in one place, of one accord praying, 'and suddenly there came from heaven the sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.' God is not always in the whirlwind, neither does He always speak in a still small voice. He came to us in Pyengyang that night with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin

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<sup>10</sup> 사경회 stemmed from Nevius Method and Week of Prayer. It used to be held at Lunar New Year's Day for a week or longer. In case of 사경회 in Pyengyang, the attendance was up to between eight hundreds and a thousand (Blair & Hunt 1977:67).

came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping.

... 'Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction. ... Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer, and the effect of that audience of hundreds of men praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out in uncontrollable weeping, and we would all weep, we could not help it. And so the meeting went on until two o'clock a.m., with confession and weeping and praying.'

The Revival in 1907 is a monumental event for the Korean churches, not only because it affected the immense growth of the Korean churches (Through the Revival, the Korean Christians and churches multiplied tens of times.), but also in regard to the formation of their liturgy. Under the influence of the Revival, the Korean churches' liturgy were shaped to be revivalist. The first revivalist feature is prayer. The Revival in 1907 evolved from prayer meetings<sup>11</sup> and generated various prayer meetings – for instance, dawn prayer, hill prayer and prayer concert (Kim 1999:180-181). The fervor for prayer is one of the characteristics of the revival as Johnston reported on the revivals taking place in India and Wales (Cf. Kim 1999:132). Various types of and meetings for prayer became a distinctive liturgy of the Korean churches through and after the Revival.

The second revivalist element of the liturgy is the sermon, whose aim is to make converts. In consequence of the Revival in 1907, the prominence of preaching in worship became enhanced even more. An influential native preacher like Sunjoo Kil appeared during the Revival and organized preaching began to be practiced by native preachers. The focus of preaching was placed generally on evangelism and the altar call was typically done at the end of the preaching (Kim 2004:26). While the sermon became dominant in Korean worship, other liturgical elements, such as lectionary, the church year, the Sacraments, etc. did not receive much attention. Lectionary was not introduced to the Korean churches at all and they were unaware

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<sup>11</sup> For example, morning prayer, noon prayer, week of prayer and watch night prayer.

of the ecumenical church year. They observed just two church holidays, Easter and Christmas (Kim 2004:26). In addition, it is not evidenced anywhere that the Eucharist was taken into account at a regular basis of Sunday worship.

Meanwhile, some missionaries attempted to replace the simple form of Korean worship with a more formalized one in the 1920s. For practical reasons, the missionaries adopted the simple form of worship initially, following the Nevius Method. However, some of them thought that it was only a tentative program and the Korean churches should have a more formal worship service (Kim 1999:188). Charles Allen Clark, a professor of Pyengyang Presbyterian Theological Seminary, was a representative figure of such claim. He suggested a form of worship that includes the confession of sins, the continuous reading of the Bible (with an optional reading of Psalms) and the Ten Commandments (with an option of the Apostles' Creed). However, this claim could not bear its fruit. Because of the huge impact of the Revival in 1907, the Korean churches had already been conventionalized with the simple form of revivalist worship. The Korean pastors did not want to give up what was familiar to them. The order for Sunday worship (1932) of the Saemunan Presbyterian Church proves this. The order does not follow Clark's suggestion, but rather the simple form of worship proposed in *위원입교인규조* (*Manual for Catechumens*, 1895) (Joo & Kim 2006:488-489; Kim 1999:193-195).

#### **2.2.4. Seeker service**

As the fourth factor, seeker service is a recent influence to the Korean churches. This non-liturgical trend of worship, arising from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in North America, counteracted the traditional worship. When mainline churches that performed the traditional worship were losing their membership, a few churches developed a seeker-sensitive worship. Willow Creek Church was a leading figure of this new movement (Thus, Thomas Long terms it the Willow Creek Force.). The Willow Creek style of worship had a great impact on people, particularly on youngsters, because the new worship style has as one of its liturgical features contemporary music that employs upbeat rhythm and praise bands in place of hymns and choirs. It also utilizes visual media such as dramatic skits and multimedia

presentations. The message of preaching is also delivered with plenty of illustrations and applications and is focused on practical and relevant issues to the people today for the most part. The general atmosphere of the Willow Creek style of worship is casual and free (Long 2001:5-8).

While the Willow Creek style of worship began to be introduced and applied to the Korean churches from 1990s, it has produced pros and cons among them. Those who disapprove of the contemporary worship style criticize that it is theologically shallow and historically unverified, and they also maintain that it just caters to the taste of contemporary consumerist culture. On the contrary, those who approve the style of worship charge the traditional worship with making worshippers spiritually poor and dissatisfied because of its stubbornness and boredom, leaving them to spiritual death. However, in spite of the arguments, most Korean churches have taken the same action as most American churches have. They have found a middle way between the two, by furnishing youngsters with the contemporary worship, which is called open worship in Korea, while adults with a traditionally formulated worship.

## **2.3. Conclusion**

Thus far, over and above the descriptions of the sermon-dominancy of the Korean Presbyterian worship, four landmarks of the Korean Presbyterian liturgical history have been enumerated. Now in theological perspective, the Korean Presbyterian history of worship can be summarized as follows: The Korean Presbyterian churches' worship has been influenced by Free Church worship, particularly Puritan and Frontier traditions.<sup>12</sup> These traditions, according to James White's classification, are positioned in the left wing with regard to liturgical matters. They share the characteristics of Biblicism (adherence to the authority of the Bible in liturgical decision-making) and congregationalism (local congregations' autonomy in making decision for liturgical issues).

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<sup>12</sup> White (1989:80) categorizes Anabaptist, Puritan and Frontier traditions into Free Church worship.

Firstly, as regards Biblicism, Puritans held that the ways of worshipping God have been made clear in the Bible, whereas Calvin vindicated considerable flexibility in liturgical decision-making, even though he maintained the authority of the Bible. They rigorously contended that the Word of God has all the sufficiency to guide their life and faith, but liturgies which are invented by human beings and do not come from God's Word, are unable to be accepted because they are self-assertive against God's will and smack of idolatry (White 1989:118-119). Preaching is the climax of Puritan liturgy (Davies 1990:133). The length of sermon is the major portion of Puritan worship. Puritans "asserted that the sermon is more important than the sacraments or any ceremonies ... The sacraments, they taught, seal the Word preached and are therefore subordinate to it" (Lloyd-Jones 1987:380).

In Frontier tradition, Biblicism rather formed a basis for weekly celebration of the Holy Communion for everyone in a congregation. A new development of biblical restorationism in the nineteenth century made it possible to achieve a general practice of the Eucharist in their worship even when Methodists, Roman Catholics and Anglicans were not doing so (White 1989:174-175). However, later development led by the New Measures<sup>13</sup> revivalists in the Frontier tradition changed the station of the Sacrament. As the altar call<sup>14</sup> came to have sacramental importance, the Eucharist was displaced from its central role in worship. The Sunday worship came to be dominated by a sermon and has become formulated with a simple structure of preliminary praises, sermon and harvest of converts (altar call) (Witvliet 2003:193-194).

Secondly, Puritan and Frontier traditions took local congregations' liturgical autonomy very seriously. They argued for liturgical freedom, so that local congregations can make worship more relevant to themselves, rather than using a fixed uniform worship. They respect the particular culture of local congregations and

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<sup>13</sup> This refers to the style of revivalism espoused by Charles G. Finney, which highlighted the place of human effort in obeying divine laws to promote religious awakenings. This conviction reflects that revival would occur whenever Christians utilized the proper God-given means (Fraser 1990:817).

<sup>14</sup> In the revivalist tradition, the altar call is a liturgy following the sermon. In the rite, believers are encouraged to publicly respond by coming to a mourner's bench, a designated place usually in the front of the congregation (Bell 1990:39).

allow them to be themselves. Relevance was their primary concern, together with biblical authority (White 1989:119, 189).

These two traditions of Puritan and Frontier are the chief liturgical theological influences to the Korean churches. They came into Korea through the four landmarks aforementioned. Firstly, the foreign missionaries were the planters of Puritan and Frontier traditions in Korea. They introduced liturgies consistent with the traditions to Korean believers. The Scottish missionaries passed on Word-centered practices, such as public preaching and instructing the Bible. The American missionaries presented kinds of revivalist prayer meetings, such as week of prayer, morning prayer and noon prayer, which were prevalent in America. In addition, they emphasized the role of preaching in worship. Corresponding to the Word-centered worship of the Puritan and Frontier, the sermon has played a critical role in the Korean Presbyterian worship. Because the American missionaries were nurtured in the background of the American Puritanism, which was greatly affected by the Great Awakenings in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, most of them were theologically conservative, and thereby, adhered to the authority of the Bible on the one hand, while being open to Moody's Revivalism<sup>15</sup> on the other hand (Park 2008:7; cf. Brown 1919:540). Being shaped under the influence of the missionaries, the Korean churches' worship was developed into a simple liturgy of the Free Church tradition.

Secondly, the Nevius Method also reflects the influence of the Free Church tradition. The principles of the Nevius mission policy to maximize the initiative of native people coincide with the congregationalism of the Free Church tradition. Moreover, the Bible class system, which laid the foundation for the revivalist worship in Korea, also corresponds with the Word-centeredness of the tradition.

Thirdly, the Revival in 1907 was a direct result of the Frontier tradition's influence. Since the Frontier worship was appropriated for revivalism by Charles G. Finney, it

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<sup>15</sup> Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions was initiated after Moody had a great impact on students in a retreat at Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts. As a result of this retreat, 229 students were sent out as missionaries, of which 69 were sent to China, 46 to Japan, and 7 to Korea. Robert A. Hardie, who kindled an eagerness for a revival in the missionaries' heart in 1903, was one of the 7 (Park 2008:11-12).



became the most influential liturgical formula in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The revivalist liturgy may be characterized as evangelical concern, emphasis on the Word and sermon as a focus of Sunday worship. Consequently, the content of preaching was aimed at making converts and the Sacrament was considered as nothing more than a reinforcement of preaching with visual aids. The form of a revivalist Sunday worship was generally very simple and minimalist, consisting of three parts, viz. singing songs of praise, a sermon and a harvest of new converts (White 1989:176-184). The early missionaries in Korea transplanted this revivalist liturgy. They put into practice a variety of revivalist prayer meetings and 사경회, which sparked the Revival in 1907. Then, as a result of the great impact of the Revival on the Korean churches, their worship services have settled down in revivalist form.

Fourthly, seeker service is in line with revivalist tradition. The Willow Creek style of worship has the characteristics of evangelistic preaching, popular music and spontaneous prayer in common with the revivalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Witvliet 2003:175). This recent development inherited pluralism, populism, pragmatism and pietism from the revivalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, therefore, the current state and the past history of the Korean Presbyterian churches' worship can be evaluated as follows: On the positive side, the Word-centered legacy of the traditions made it possible that Korean Christianity has been established firmly on the ground of the authority of the Bible and has grown rapidly. However, on the other side, the liturgy of the Korean churches cannot avoid being poor, as a result of the Word-centered practices. Their worship became simple and plain, so that they have not thought much about the theological implications of various liturgical gifts in Christianity and their liturgical consequences, one of such being visual media of art, imagery and symbolism.

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<sup>16</sup> Witvliet (2003:164-166) explains the four influences on the American revivalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Firstly, the political democracy shaped the American Christianity so that democratic traits like freedom of choice, voluntary association, and skepticism of centralized authority became the virtues in religious realm of America too. Secondly, the American religious populism developed in the climate of the religious pluralism. American Christians could choose their churches in all varieties. Thirdly, religious leaders like Charles G. Finney, who advocated pragmatism, played an active part. Lastly, Pietism at that time made a model of a passionate and demonstrative faith and an individual decision to convert.



### **3. Art and aesthetics in Christianity: A Cinderella story**

In the previous chapter, I have demonstrated the sermon-dominancy of the Korean Presbyterian worship with several authors' remarks and surveys, and I have also clarified several roots of it in the research of the Korean churches' history. In chapters 3 and 4, I will introduce aesthetics as a theological locus and a partner that theology should dialogue with. Particularly, this chapter will be assigned to prove that art/aesthetics is not alien to the Christian church throughout the history after rough definitions of some important terms are given for the study.

#### **3.1. Definitions of terms**

##### **3.1.1. Art**

What is art? It is never easy to find one and right answer to this question. Because genres and concepts of art are constantly changing, the definition of art is controversial. Some are even skeptical about whether a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a thing's being a work of art can be specified. When one hear the question of art, he or she, in a narrow sense, would probably think of the fine arts such as visual arts, literary arts, performing arts (play or dance), music and architecture. Or, one would think of a broader sense of 'the art of life' such as cooking, quilt and mechanical work, the skills or know-how underlying our ordinary life.<sup>17</sup>

The theoretical concepts of art have developed in various ways throughout the history.<sup>18</sup> The ideas can be enumerated as follows: art as mimesis, i.e. an imitation of inner world or transcendent realities; art as an epiphany of beauty; art as a cry emerging from the inauthenticity of being in search of true being; art as sensory

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<sup>17</sup> Art as the skill of ordinary life is derived from the ancient concept. The Greek *technē* or the Latin *ars*, which are the etymology of the word 'art', meant the practical skill, technique and know-how that someone in any of the professions such as law, medicine and crafts should possess (Brown 1989:81).

<sup>18</sup> For the ensuing discussions of the concepts of art, I am indebted to Koch (2004:389-391).

expression; art as play or game; art as irritation; art as a way to break routine and habits; art as confrontation with one's own reality or the reality of the world.

The definition of art as mimesis has been dominant since the time of Greco-Roman antiquity to the threshold of modern times. The Platonic tradition deemed art to be the imitation of the real and eternal realities. The Aristotelian tradition, basically standing in the line of this mimesis concept, affirmed that art should be given a higher dignity: Art can represent the very nature of things and of humanity. It manifests not only the reality of this world and history in which we live, but also its deep dimension, the very essence of it.

Another prevailing view is art as an epiphany of beauty. Since the Middle Ages, art has been seen as a visible expression of the eternal beauty of God. Although the modern understanding of art as an autonomous enterprise has brought the depreciation of the concept of beauty and therewith the decline in art's relation to the archetype of divine beauty, the interpretation of art as a mediator of beauty still remains to the present day. Pope John Paul II (4 April 1999), in his remarkable letter, addressed to artists: "To all who are passionately dedicated to the search for new "epiphanies" of beauty so that through their creative work as artists they may offer these as gifts to the world".

Martin Heidegger's understanding of art also made a significant stroke. According to him, the nature of artworks is to express the existential cry of being in search of true being. His approach implies that art is a human expression in search for meaning.

Besides these, there are many approaches to art today. For some, art is a way for self-expression or expression of the human world. For others, it is understood as a playful realization of life; as a way to break through routine and usual habits; as the confrontation with the truth and reality of the world that is often hidden by social and individual conventions; or even as an irritation.

The understanding of art is thus chaotic. It seems that there cannot be a consensual

definition of art. However, even if it is conceded, any definition of art may be squared with the following constraints (Cf. Adajian 23 October 2007):

- (i) Medium (artifacts or performances) exists in every art. All arts have forms and media that we can observe and perceive through our senses.
- (ii) An artwork is created by the use not only of human skills and techniques, but of divine gifts such as imagination, intuition, inspiration, empathy. Making of an artwork is a combination of the human and divine activities.
- (iii) Art is made with aesthetic interest. Here the term 'aesthetic' should not be equated with pleasantness, and thereby, artworks that look ugly and unpleasant but communicate something good and true are also justifiable to be regarded as art. This is because beauty is not an independent value from others, but should be discerned in unity with the good and the true. In light of this unity of beauty, goodness and truth, the opposite concept of beauty is not ugliness, but kitsch, which is possibly pretty but does not impart goodness and truth.<sup>19</sup>
- (iv) Art cannot be separated from non-aesthetic interests, for example, religious, political or ethical concerns. Since the Enlightenment, the notion of art for art's sake has been promoted. This notion of autonomous art is to claim that whatever is aesthetic is 'pure' by its nature, so that it has nothing to do with practicality of religion, ethics, politics or anything else; it is only for aesthetic pleasure (Brown 1989:6). However, the history of art does not approve of such claim. It rather demonstrates that art is not pure and that art is inherently associated with non-aesthetic concerns.<sup>20</sup>
- (v) Meaning becomes another important idiosyncrasy of art and of artistic reason. While science (and possibly traditional theology, too) is bound closely to rational knowledge and perception, art is more likely meaning-based thinking through the sense knowledge. In an experience of a work of art, not only the rational knowledge is engaged, but the meaning of being and of the experience is also pursued (Koch 2004:388).
- (vi) Art includes a process of interpretation. An artwork is made from an artist's

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. 4.2.1 for further discussion.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 4.3.4 for further discussion.

interpretation of his or her reality. Then, the interpretation does not end there. The artwork stimulates viewers/listeners/audience to interpret their own reality, making them anticipate a better reality (Louw 2001:335).

Synthesizing all these constraints, my humble definition of art may be presented as follows: Art is an aesthetic (beautiful or ugly) medium (object or activity) that is observable through the senses; that is a combination of human skills with the divine gifts (imagination and inspiration); and that inspires the human being to interpret reality (which is often non-aesthetic) in an anticipation of transforming it.

### **3.1.2. Aesthetics**

Although the discipline of philosophical aesthetics as a theory of beauty and art arose in the eighteenth century, it was not the first philosophical account of beauty and art. Plato wrote about the beauty of ideal forms and of knowledge about them: Knowledge is beautiful and good because the knowledge of ideal truths comprises the true reality of things. However, with regard to art, he had a negative view, because he believed that our world is a mere replica of the ideal. For him, art is a poor copy of copies.

Aristotle, differing from his teacher, argued that poetry (by which he meant tragic drama) is more philosophical, universal and momentous than history. Poetry speaks more of the universal according to the laws of probability or necessity, while history speaks of particulars that happened in the world (Herwitz 2008:11-12; Shields 25 September 2008).

Despite their different attitudes to poetry, both philosophers evaluated art in intellectualist terms: Whether it can yield knowledge or not is critical to its value. The only way for poetry to have any value in Platonic thought is that it offers knowledge. In Aristotle's understanding as well, the function of tragic drama is to 'learn' about ourselves (Herwitz 2008:14-15).

In the mid-eighteenth century, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-62) coined the

term 'aesthetics' for the first time in his *Reflections on Poetry* (1735) and *Aesthetica* (1750). 'Aesthetics' was adopted from the Greek word 'aeskesis', which carries the meaning of 'sense perception'. Baumgarten's aim was to found a new science distinguished from the logical sciences and the natural sciences. He wanted this new discipline to be a science that could research sensory experience as a particular kind of cognition, that is, the science concerned with sense knowledge. The aim of aesthetics, for Baumgarten, was not just to appreciate sensibility (the use of the five senses), but to perfect knowledge through the senses, and this perfection he considered to be beauty itself. To put it in other words, beauty is not an attribute of things, or a feeling of what is pleasant, but rather an expression of perfect knowledge through the senses (Cilliers 2011a:258; Herwitz 2008:21-23; Thiessen 2005:156).

By identifying beauty as the cognition of sensuous particulars, the aesthetics of the eighteenth century focused on the issue of beauty, because that people view their world – nature, for instance – as pleasing or beautiful is a pre-logical, initial experience. Finding something beautiful was not to be measured as knowing or learning something, but instead an experience of its own value. The senses were freed from disapproval and the beauty was liberated from the burden of knowledge-giving. In the nineteenth century, aesthetics was linked to the arts, because the experience we have in encountering music, art and poetry is nothing less than the sort of experience of beauty, and therewith, the arts (or theory of the arts) gradually came to define aesthetics, whereas the notion of beauty became marginal to aesthetics. Although beauty still had a place in definitions of aesthetics, it was merely understood as part of the definition of aesthetics insofar as scholars viewed the arts as containing an element of beauty. In the twentieth century, beauty became marginalized even more and was virtually excised from the definition of aesthetics, because beauty was thought to play a minor role in the arts and to have little relevance in the contemporary arts. (Note artworks that do not necessarily express beautiful aspects of things, but manifest the ugliness and suffering in the world such as wars, nuclear weapons, hunger and human alienation.) (Cilliers 2011a:258-259; Farley 2001:x; cf. Beardsley 1968:207-208).

However, beauty is a fundamental concept for aesthetics because it is an important

motif for artistic experience. Though artworks could have ugly and shocking subjects, their contents could never be ugly in their totality (Refer to the example of Picasso's *Guernica*, in which the ugliness of the war points toward what contrasts to it.). Moreover, in order for an artist to display what looks ugly, he or she cannot but be bound to what is necessary for expressions such as geometrical shapes, musical transitions, linguistic devices. To display anything at all – even the abstract and ugly – artists must engage the world by way of its resonances, colors, sounds and languages. These determinate expressions evoke beauty. Therefore, beauty cannot be removed from aesthetic categories and experiences (Farley 2001:112).

In addition to beauty, imagination should also be counted as an important concept of aesthetics. Addison explicitly argued in the series of his papers *On the pleasures of the imagination* in 1712 that imagination allows us the various pleasures of grandeur and novelty as well as beauty (Guyer 2004:29-30). Addison and Baumgarten both emphasize an aesthetic experience as integrated. It puts together elements (objects, forms, contents and sensation, for instance) into a whole, and the recognition of that whole, that is, the active process of synthesizing it in the imagination is the experience of the beauty (Herwitz 2008:23-24).

Thus, in aesthetics, neither can beauty be plucked out, nor can it be a philosophical science without the being of things and works of art. It is a synthesis of a variety of aesthetical elements like beauty, art, imagination and senses

### 3.1.3. Theological aesthetics

Aesthetics has been disregarded for a long time in the history of theology<sup>21</sup>, in spite of the fact that Christians from the very early age have richly applied the beauty and

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<sup>21</sup> Those who are skeptical of aesthetical approach in theology object to it generally based on two arguments: Firstly, there is a risk of aestheticism, which would lead us to perversion of idolatry rather than to revelation of God. Secondly, an aesthetic approach in theology does not find its sources in scripture or revelation, but in philosophical aesthetics or art. According to Van Erp (2004:43), "The idea behind this criticism is that theology should not try to find its foundations in dialogue with other disciplines, or that it should not even seek ultimate foundations for theological reflection at all" because they are assumed to be unknowable by human rationality. However, theologians cannot remain closed to dialogues with other academic disciplines. Furthermore, as will be disclosed by the subsequent discussions in this research, the dialogue between theology and aesthetics is never incompatible with the tradition of revelation.

arts to their faith and life. However, in the last few decades, many theologians have re-appreciated the significance of the beauty and arts for theology, and so the aesthetical subjects like beauty, imagination and arts have returned to theological issues (Van Erp 2004:42).<sup>22</sup>

However, the situation with theological aesthetics is untidy. The authors and texts that one might call classics have not been established yet. Although there are central texts in this area by thinkers such as Tillich, Von Balthasar, Van der Leeuw and Burch Brown, it is not clear yet which contributions will finally be judged to have a great influence on theological aesthetics in the future (Thiessen 2005:204). Besides that, the subject matter of theological aesthetics is not defined clearly. Generally, there are two directions in theological aesthetics. One direction places emphasis on the role of the arts when theology is put into practice through the use of, or by an appeal to artistic media, for example, particular type of imagery, lighting and objects in worship spaces, music during liturgical services, or imaginative language in sermons. The study of this direction investigates how works of art mediate religious meaning and beliefs, and how faith is expressed in the language of art (a theology of the arts). Both faith and art pertain to reality imaginatively and affect people in a way inexpressible with words only. In terms of these similarities between them, the possibility of mediation and expression of the divine is explained. In the other direction, the accent is put on the role of beauty as a fundamental or systematic theological issue (a theology of beauty). Here, the concept of beauty is understood as an important and intrinsic characteristic of theological rationality, but not necessarily related with the arts (Bychkov 2008:xii).

According to scholars, definitions of theological aesthetics vary. To mention some of them, Von Balthasar defines theological aesthetics as the theology of beauty (Bychkov 2008:xii). Farley distinguishes between the two directions of studies and uses different terminologies for them: He designates a theology of the arts as theological aesthetics and a theology of beauty as theological aesthetic (Farley 2001:117). Vrudny, in the same stance as Von Balthasar, describes theological

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<sup>22</sup> For art/aesthetics in the history of Christianity, refer to 3.2.

aesthetics as the study of the theological dimension of beauty (Vrudny 2008:35). Though all these are good tries to delineate theological aesthetics, I am of the same opinion as Thiessen and Viladesau about what theological aesthetics is. Thiessen (2005:1-2), paraphrasing Viladesau (Cf. 1999:11), states the definition of theological aesthetics as follows:

... theological aesthetics is concerned with questions about God and issues in theology in the light of and perceived through sense knowledge (sensation, feeling, imagination), through beauty, and the arts. This is a wide 'definition' which hints at the multi-faceted contents and methods in theological aesthetics. ... theological aesthetics would generally imply a broad, inclusive term rather than a narrow concept, especially as it includes the dialogue between theology and the arts, rather than being limited to a theology of beauty.

### **3.2. The status of art and aesthetics in Christian history**

Art and religion have an intimate relationship throughout human history. Just because beauty and art are so primordial to human experience, human beings have found ways of expressing the aesthetic dimension of their experience into enduring forms since the prehistoric era. This is evidenced by examples of prehistoric art – the rock paintings of dancing Khoisan in Southern Africa, the depiction of people, animals and symbols in the caves at Lascaux, France. These pictures, which are widely accepted as the first artistic representations in human history, may explicitly and implicitly have the religious connection: A great deal of Khoisan art depicts themes of healing or trance dance, the complex somatic experiences of dancers – their most central ritual. In the case of Lascaux caves, most of the paintings are located at a distance from the cave's entrance, and many of the chambers are not easily accessible. This placement, together with the enormous size and compelling grandeur of the paintings, suggests that the remote chambers may have served as sacred or ceremonial meeting places (Blundell October 2001; Tedesco October 2000; August 2007). Since ancient times, art served as an important medium for denoting the holy, the transcendent and the sublime evidently (Cf. García-Rivera 2003:1-3).

A similar intimacy with art pertains to the history of Christianity, in which the close



relationship of religion and art is unmistakably obvious. The Christian faith has been conveyed by means of its buildings and images throughout the history as much as by its theological texts. These visible forms sometimes provided a more striking interpretation of Scripture than the texts of theologians. Besides they were certainly more within reach to people (Dyrness 2001:156).

They [Religious communities] do not remember, praise or celebrate an abstract and formless sacred: they dance, pipe and narrate the sacred by way of the beautiful body, the musical instrument and the oral or written story. Even though arts are not themselves the origin, or even the primary mediation, of beauty in the life of faith, neither are they trivial in the communities of faith (Farley 2001:111).

The story of beauty and art is very much similar to that of Cinderella: Beauty/art, named 'aesthetics', was a beloved one in the family of 'Christianity' at one time as attested by archaeological findings in early house churches. Yet, 'aesthetics' was deprived of the position of a beloved by iconoclastic tendency in some of the family. It was sometimes neglected and despised in other times, but never eradicated totally from the family. And then, 'aesthetics' has been restored to its status of a beloved by gaining attention from a corner of theology in the twentieth century. Now, the following is her story.

### **3.2.1. In the early church**

From the nineteenth century into early twentieth century, it has been generally assumed among scholars that Scripture and the early Christians were antagonistic to contemporary visual art and that visual art hardly existed until the time of Constantine. However, such assumptions can no longer be maintained, because the study of church history and archaeological discoveries of early Christian art are providing evidences in opposition to the assumptions. Now, we witness the continuity of Christian art from the early church through the post-Constantinian Christendom, rather than the dissonance that was previously assumed (De Gruchy 2001:17; Dillenberger 1987:3).

### **3.2.1.1. Aesthetics in the church fathers' writings**

Early church fathers developed ideas of theological aesthetics in their writings. Ranging from c.160 to c.650 AD, the church fathers dealt with themes such as the vision of God or of God's glory, the image of God in Christ and in us, and the concern with idol worship.

On the subject of the vision of God, Justin Martyr for the first time remarked that the glory of God (For him, God is glory.) appears in visions, and he made an analogy between the visible light of Christ, inseparable from the Father, and the sunlight, inseparable from the sun (Cf. Thiessen 2005:15). Irenaeus claims that humans, by their vision of God, will become immortal and attain to God, and that God reassimilated the human to God Himself in becoming the incarnate, visible Son (Cf. Thiessen 2005:17). Origen also asserts that the glory of the invisible Godhead is seen through the express image of the incarnate Son, and explores an analogy of light (Cf. Thiessen 2005:18-19). Basil and Gregory of Nyssa emphasize purification of the eye of the soul. Only the one who has a purified mind will see the beauty of God, they contend (Cf. Thiessen 2005:23, 25-26). Augustine states much the same, exclaiming that the only way to see God is through the purification of the heart and that the vision of divine beauty is promised to Christians (Cf. Thiessen 2005:29, 31). Here, the act of seeing does not necessarily refer to the physical sight, but to understanding with a pure heart in a spiritualized sense. Seeing God was thus regarded as a spiritual, intellectual, ethical and even ascetical activity. This may show the Platonic influence on the church fathers (Cf. Thiessen 2005:32-33).

The Platonist and Neo-Platonist thinking of the time was one of the causes that shaped the early theologians' thought. For Plato, the contemplation of the forms, i.e. the structures and the way of being, is something whereby we have a glimpse of the beautiful. He asserts that one reaches the knowledge of the beautiful from an ascent of knowledge of sensuous beauty. Plotinus, the most important Neo-Platonist, expands on Plato by asserting that beauty is not simply the order of the forms, but is also present and alive in the soul. The soul, by purifying itself, becomes good and beautiful and thus assimilates to the One or the Good who is the ultimate Beauty. In

both Plato and Plotinus, the vision of the beautiful is an intellectual act, whereas the aesthetic act of seeing with a physical eye is regarded as subordinate. In other words, the vision of exterior beauty is only a first step for one to perceive the source and the cause of all sensuous beauty. Influenced by these philosophers immensely, the church fathers developed thoughts like the purification of heart and soul as a requirement to see God; the vision of God or of the beautiful through the intellect; and the symbolism of light for the Christ (Thiessen 2005:9-10).

However undeniable the Platonic influence, the church fathers made an essential change in their thought concerning the vision of the divine, that is, the development of the dogma of the revelation of God in the incarnate Son, and of the dogma of the Trinity. On Christ as the image of God, the church fathers (e.g. Irenaeus, Origen, Lactantius, Hilary, Ambrose and Augustine) maintain in general consent that those who believe in Jesus see in him the perfect image of the invisible God, the prototype. Jesus the Son is symbolized as the light that shows the Father. They praise Christ as the light of truth, the true glorious image of God. Through him we not only know God but also are assimilated to Him (Thiessen 2005:10).

In Trinitarian perspective, the Holy Spirit likewise plays a role in the vision of God and the presence of (divine) beauty in the world. Irenaeus seems to be the first theologian, in this regard, who elaborated on the Spirit's function. He wrote: "God will be seen by the men who bear his Spirit ... God the Father is shown forth, as the Spirit works and the Son administers and the Father approves, and man is made perfect for his salvation" (Quoted in Thiessen 2005:17). Clement of Alexandria refers to the Spirit figuratively as the holy myrrh with which men and women should be fragrant (Cf. Thiessen 2005:49). Ambrose likewise explores the biblical metaphors regarding the Spirit as the 'ointment of Christ', 'the oil of gladness', and as light and fire (Cf. Thiessen 2005:26-28). In these early theologians' writings, the Holy Spirit is described as the one who communicates God's beauty in the natural world and who inspires artistic creation. Although the Spirit and its creative, imaginative inspiration are highlighted less often in the early writers than Christ as image of God, the Spirit's role as the one who transmits God's beauty, goodness and truth in the world is an element in Christian thoughts right from the beginning (Thiessen 2005:10-11).

The church fathers dealt with idolatry as another issue of their writings. Because in the ancient world idol worship or the worship of many gods was a fact of everyday life, the Christian thinkers had much concern about the matter of idolatry. They could not help addressing this problem, so they challenged the misguided worship of idols with the truth of the one God whose only perfect image (*eikon*) is that of Christ. The Christian writers claimed that images of Christ or any figures of the divine should be prohibited. Otherwise one would be susceptible to worship the sculptures or images made of matter rather than the invisible transcendent God (Cf. writings of Justin and Lactantius in Thiessen 2005:44-47). Later, this issue would come back again in the disputes of the Byzantine iconoclasts of the seventh and eighth centuries and the Reformers in the sixteenth century (Thiessen 2005:11).

The writings of the church fathers evidently reflect the dualistic viewpoint originating from the Platonism, so that they assert superiority and purity of spiritual life, soul, and intellect, while feeling suspicious of and even deprecating the body and the senses. For example, Augustine describes the eye's pleasures of his flesh as the lower kind of beauties. These, according to him, disturb his search for the true spiritual beauty of God. However, despite this dualism, it should be pointed out that the church fathers' writings are interspersed with the imaginative languages such as metaphors and symbols. In talking of the transcendent reality of God, our expression cannot be and has never been anything but analogical inevitably, though God is unnameable in an ultimate sense, because we are limited to the confines of human languages. Notice the symbolism of light which the early Christian writers adopted to speak of Christ Jesus and also Ambrose's metaphors for the Holy Spirit. Thus, Thiessen (2005:12) appreciates the significance of the sensuous aesthetic expressions as follows:

... while these thinkers were obsessed with a 'pure' spiritual way of life, and frequently suspicious of the sensuous bodily realm, their mode of communicating the truths of faith was often emphatically sensuous, imaginative, emotional, intimate, and expressive of desire and yearning.

The church fathers speak of God not only as creator, but they also refer to God in

biblical and artistic terms as supreme artist (Cf. Ambrose and Augustine in Thiessen 2005:41-42), or as musician and craftsman (Cf. Paulinus of Nola in Thiessen 2005:43). Gregory particularly employs the analogy of painting, in order to illustrate how the followers of Christ must imitate the model of Christ and be conformed to him. He elaborates:

Therefore, just as when we are learning the art of painting, the teacher puts before us on a panel a beautifully executed model, and it is necessary for each student to imitate in every way the beauty of that model on his own panel, so that the panels of all will be adorned in accordance with the example of the beauty set before them. ... one must prepare the pure colours of the virtues, mixing them with each other according to some artistic formula for the imitation of beauty, so that we become an image of the image, having achieved the beauty of the Prototype through activity as a kind of imitation (Quoted in Thiessen 2005:40).

This artistic coloring of theological words and issues naturally brings the early Christians' discussions to the idea of beauty. For them, beauty is seen as a sign of divine revelation in accord with qualities of truth, goodness and unity. Beauty is objective, and always considered to have to do with spiritual and moral implication (e.g. the connection they made between seeing God's beauty and purification of the soul). The beautiful cannot be thought of apart from the good and the true, as God is the supreme Beauty, Goodness and Truth in Godself (Thiessen 2005:12-13).

### **3.2.1.2. Art in the pre-Constantinian church**

Besides the early church fathers' writings about the beauty of God, archaeological discoveries become another justification to say that the early church did not exclude art and aesthetics and that images in fact existed in the early period of the church. The earliest known survivals of Christian art are to be found in the catacombs; in sarcophagi from various locations – from catacombs, private cemeteries, and other sources; in the frontier town of Dura-Europos (Dillenberger 1987:8-9).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dura-Europos is an old Roman frontier city situated on the western bank of the Euphrates River, about halfway between Aleppo and Baghdad. This city was accidentally discovered in 1921. The Jewish synagogue and the early Christian church in Dura-Europos are renowned for the artworks preserved there. The paintings decorating the synagogue and the church date back to 240s C.E. and



In the art of the early Christians, the figure of Christ is often represented in either of three forms – as Orpheus, the Good Shepherd, or Helios. Firstly, Orpheus, with Phrygian cap and lyre taming the beasts, is a deliverance figure. The Christ in the figure of Orpheus appears six times in the Roman catacombs, the oldest in St. Callixtus, from the beginning of the third century. The following is the one in the catacombs of Domitilla in the mid-third century (Dillenberger 1987:10).

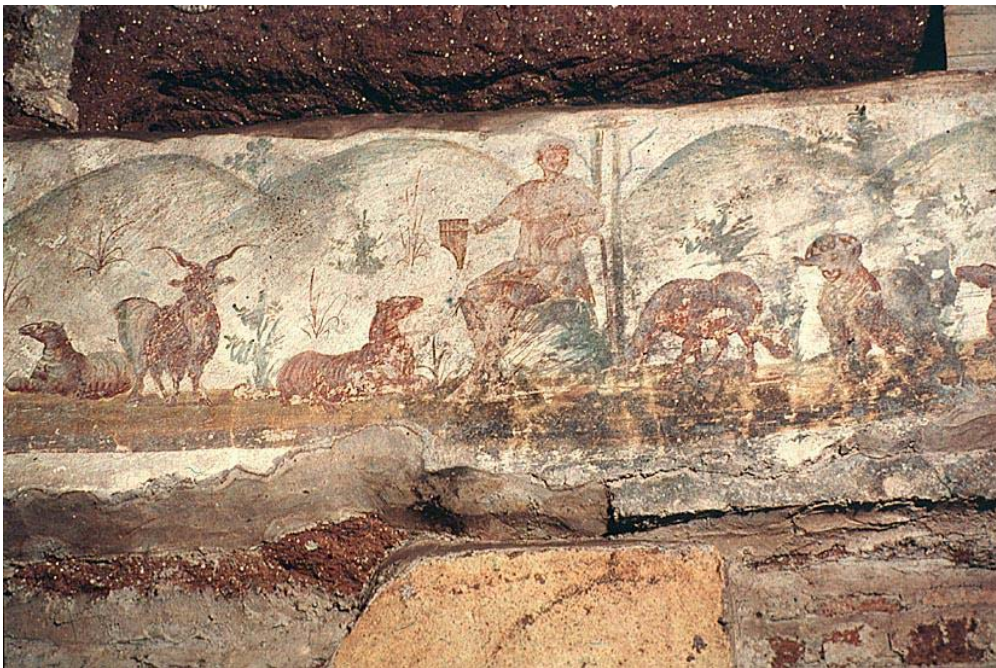


Figure 1. Source: <http://rolfgross.dreamhosters.com/Rome-Guide/Catacombs/Catacombs.html>

Secondly, the image of the Good Shepherd is an emblematic Christ figure of the time. It appears recurrently in the early Christian art such as in the ceiling of the cubiculum of the Velati in the catacomb of Priscilla (figure 2); in the Dura-Europos baptistry; standing alone in a statuette from Asia Minor, which is now in the Cleveland Museum of Art (figure 3); in sarcophagi. All of these are thought to date before the year 300. Although the Orpheus figure has no scriptural base, the Good Shepherd obviously

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these are considered to be the most revolutionary discovery that calls into question the widely believed assumption of aniconic stance of Jewish and early Christian traditions. These artworks rather show that the Jewish and Christian traditions might have religious diversity in them and the use of figurative motifs and representational art would be common in the traditions because it is hard to think that these artworks were unprecedented (Thompson 1996:241-242).

does (as in Psalms 23, 78, 80, 100, and in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, John, Matthew, Luke, Acts, 1 Peter, and Hebrews). The image of the Good Shepherd is frequently found with specific Christian symbols of deliverance – particularly associated with Jonah, which is a typical motif of deliverance and baptism (Cf. Matthew 12:39-40), as well as of the death and resurrection of Christ (Dillenberger 1987:10, 12).



Figure 2. Source:

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_commissions/archeo/inglese/documents/rc\\_com\\_archeo\\_doc\\_20011010\\_cataccrist\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_commissions/archeo/inglese/documents/rc_com_archeo_doc_20011010_cataccrist_en.html)



Figure 3. Source:

<http://ionascribe.blogspot.com/2006/11/apollochrist.html>

In the small tomb of the Julii (known as tomb M) in the excavations of the necropolis under St. Peter's appeared Helios, another symbol for Christ, which is derived from the cult of the Invincible Sun. This pagan image, just as the case of Orpheus was so, was borrowed and incorporated in Christian terms to represent a Christian meaning. The image represents the Christ as the sun of righteousness and the light of truth through whom we know the invisible God. It should be noted here that the symbolism of Christ as the light by the early Christian thinkers has much relevance to this representation. A passage by Clement of Alexandria is exemplified in the following:

For just as “if the sun were not, the world would have been in perpetual night, ...” so unless we had come to know the Word, and had been enlightened by His rays, we should have been in no way different from birds who are being crammed with food, fattening in darkness and reared for death. Let us admit the light, that we may admit God. Let us admit the light, and become disciples of the Lord. ... Hail, O Light. Upon us who lay buried in darkness and shut up in the shadow of death a light shone forth from heaven, purer than the sun and sweeter than the life of earth. That light is life eternal, and whatsoever things partake of it, live. ... For he who rides over the universe, “the sun of righteousness,” visits mankind impartially, imitating His Father, who “causes His sun to rise upon all men,” and sprinkles them all with the dew of truth (Quoted in Dillenberger 1987:14).

These three images for Christ were undoubtedly derived from the Hellenistic source of the time, but Christians of that day adopted them with a transformative reinterpretation, so that the images had a new meaning in the Christian context (Cf. Finney 1994:230). The Orpheus and Good Shepherd images evoked belief in deliverance through Christ and the Sun God image aroused the true knowledge of God through Christ (Cf. Dillenberger 1987:12).

Besides the transplanted and reinterpreted images of Christ, works of art with other Christian subjects are also found variously – for example, Moses striking the rock, Jonah, the raising of Lazarus, Daniel in the lion’s den, the sacrifice of Isaac, three men in the fiery furnace, Moses on Sinai, Job forsaken by his friends, the visit of the Magi, the wedding of Cana, healing miracles such as the healing of the paralytic, the woman with an issue of blood, the demoniac, the blind man, the multiplication of the loaves, and Christ and the woman at the well. What is noticeable from the list of the subjects for Christian art is that the early Christian artworks did not feature the crucifixion or the resurrection as the subject; they rather focused on deliverance through healing, on rescue from threatening natural and historical events. Possibly, this fact may be relevant to the situation of the time when Christianity was still proscribed and subject to persecution. In the fearful context of the church in that day, the primal motif of their artistic creation must be hope, such as that Jesus the Good Shepherd searches for his lost sheep; “if Lazarus and Jonah could rise from the dead, then so can we; if people could be healed by Jesus, so can we” (Cilliers



2012a:18). The people of the first centuries expressed this hope aesthetically through the images (Dillenberger 1987:15, 19; cf. Snyder 1996:461).

The paintings of the early Christian church seem to have a connection with liturgical practices. For instance, some of the catacomb paintings describe Eucharistic banquet scenes related to the occasional services on the anniversary of the death of a significant saint. Furthermore, a cycle of paintings decorating the baptistery of the house church at Dura-Europos also appears to be in sync with baptismal processions and practices. Kraeling (1967:196-197) writes regarding this:

In the scene of the Woman at the Well the candidate is being taught to understand that as the Samaritan Woman who went out to draw water from Jacob's Well received the gift of "living water," so he does in connection with the water of baptism receive the "speaking and living water" of the divine revelation. In the scene of David and Goliath the candidate is being taught that as David was by virtue of his unction at the hands of Samuel enabled to overcome the might of Goliath, so he through the holy oil of baptism receives the divine power that guards him from and makes him superior to all evil Satanic powers. In the same way, in the scenes of the Women at the Tomb the candidate is being taught that as the Women who went to Christ's Tomb to perform the pious act of anointing his body received from the three angelic visitors the assurance and the announcement of Christ's victory over Death, so he in and with the rite of baptism receives assurance of and has the experience of his own triumph over Death and participation in eternal life.

### **3.2.1.3. Art in the Constantinian imperial church**

In the art of the (post-)Constantinian church, two changes can be mentioned compared with the art in the previous era. Firstly, during the Constantinian period, art was understood more in terms of didactic function – the Bible for the illiterate. As the northern countries of Europe were being Christianized, some through missionary activities and others as the result of invasions from the north, art became more and more useful and important for didactic function. In such situation, paintings were utilized together with preaching for the assimilation, if not the transformation, of a great number of new Christians. The famous statements of some church leaders of the time also emerged in this setting: Pope Leo the Great in the mid-fifth century

stated that cycles of paintings should be on the walls of churches as a means of instructing converts and believers. Pope Gregory the Great, in addition, asserted that paintings were the Bible of the illiterate. On this account, paintings and sculptures portraying various episodes of Christ's life are found in the churches of the period. Illustrative of this is a sarcophagus from about 330 in the Museo Pio Cristiano. In its center is Christ, performing healing ministry (figure 4), to the right the multiplication of loaves and fishes, then the entry into Jerusalem. For another instance, on the cyprus doors in Santa Sabina, dating from about 432-440, there are major scenes from the Old Testament, including Elijah, Habakkuk, and Daniel. Christ is bearded, and most of the scenes are related with the passion and its resolution. Here the crucifixion also appears, (which is the first depiction of crucifixion in history) (figure 5), the ascension, and Christ flanked by alpha and omega in accord with Revelation 12:12-13 (Dillenberger 1987:23, 34).



Figure 4. Source:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/42858885@N00/3413556129/in/gallery-adfinem-72157631539197256/>



Figure 5. Source: <http://www.rome101.com/Topics/Christian/Sabina/>

Secondly, the description of Christ in the figure of Orpheus or Good Shepherd was replaced with a more direct portrayal of Christ that represented him as the ruler and the judge of the world. The depiction of Christ develops into that of Christ in majesty. An example of this is a panel with a bust of Christ, now in the Museum at Ostia Antica (figure 6). Here, the Christ figure with nimbus has long hair and heavy beard. It is the prototype that becomes Christ the Pantocrator afterwards. In the Santa Pudenziana apse mosaic (before 417), too, is Christ sitting securely and serenely on a throne, visibly at the center of all (figure 7) (Dillenberger 1987:25).



Figure 6. Source: <http://www.ostia-antica.org/region3/7/7-8.htm>





Figure 7. Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/92627/Christ-as-Ruler-with-the-Apostles-and-Evangelists-The-female>

This change in the depiction of Christ is relevant to the changing status of the church. As the destiny of the church was changed from its obscure beginnings to its central role in the society since the official approval in 313, the previous images of Orpheus and the Good Shepherd diminished in use to disappearance. The central role of the church in the society was reflected in the image of the sovereign Lord Christ enthroned, reigning in and over the world. “The transition from the shepherd whose role was to protect those in trouble to the reigning Christ symbolized the emancipating and more secure role that Christians now could enjoy” (Dillenberger 1987:28).

The cyclic images of biblical stories and the reigning Christ are combined with liturgy as shown in San Vitale in Ravenna. San Vitale, dedicated in 548, is liturgically sacramental. The mosaics in it represent what happens in the sacramental rites – the offering of the people and Christ’s offering himself for the people through bread and wine. At the center of the dome is the Lamb of God, the symbol of the Eucharistic offering. In addition, over the pillars under the dome there are two mosaics of special Eucharistic significance. The mosaic on the left shows Sarah and Abraham with three angels appearing to him in the Valley of Mamre (Genesis 18).

The three angels are behind a table, reminiscent of early altars, and, on the table, three cakes that Sarah has prepared have the sign of the cross on them. To the right of the table, Abraham is about to sacrifice the little Isaac, and a lamb is looking back at both (figure 8). On the right wall, Abel offering a lamb and Melchizedek holding bread are standing on opposite sides of an altar. On the altar are a chalice and two loaves of bread, and above the altar is the hand of God, symbolizing both God's presence and God's acceptance of the offerings (figure 9). In the apse mosaic, moreover, the reigning Christ, sitting on a globe with the Book of Life in his left hand and offering a wreath with his right, is receiving the saint of the church (figure 10) (Dillenberger 1987:28, 30).

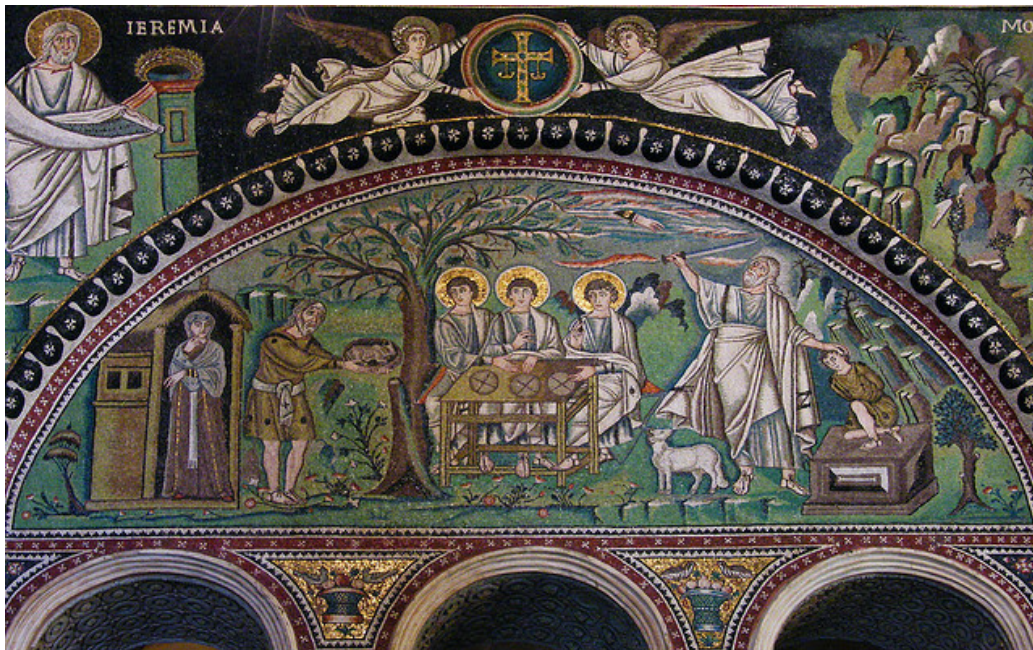


Figure 8. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tortipede/3679162741/>





Figure 9. Source: <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/ravenna-san-vitale>



Figure 10. Source: <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/ravenna-san-vitale>

From the preceding writings of the church fathers and the artistic examples can a conclusion be drawn: There is no reason to believe that the early Christians opposed to the visual. Rather, the earliest works that have survived till now evidence a

situation in which religious art seems to have been taken for granted. Christians worshipped God and celebrated liturgy from the beginning, surrounded by aesthetical depictions of their faith. The close interwovenness of aesthetics and liturgy was manifest in the early church period (Dillenberger 1987:19).

### **3.2.2. In the medieval church**

During the Middle Ages, theologians continued to develop themes pertaining to theological aesthetics – i.e. the idea of beauty, the vision of God, the image of Christ, the iconodule-iconoclast conflict – as the early Christian predecessors did. The medieval thinkers took up the Plato-Pseudo-Dionysius line of thought for the most part,<sup>24</sup> so they contemplated on the symbolism of light for the vision of God (or, of God's beauty). Yet still, their idea of the relationship between beauty and light is not totally identical with the early church fathers'. While the early Christian theologians had seen light in a metaphorical meaning, stating that the beauty of God was 'like' a light, the medieval thinkers grasped the visible light itself as an epiphany, emanation of God. As the Aristotelian view was appropriated by Aquinas, the central voice of medieval theology, material things of light and color were regarded as sources and epiphanies of divine beauty.<sup>25</sup> Stained glass windows in great Gothic cathedrals and the illuminated manuscripts are the most conspicuous testimonies to these theological-aesthetic perceptions on light and beauty (Thiessen 2005:59). Impressed by light as the substance and form of God's presence, Abbot Suger constructed a church building full of light. By the new technique of rib vaulting, the building was able to be elevated and solid walls were no longer necessary to support the vaulting. In place of walls, extensive windows were added and brought light into the building by developing stained glass (Dillenberger 1987:40).

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<sup>24</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius developed aesthetics on beauty to the richest among the patristic fathers. He synthesized (Neo-)Platonist and biblical thoughts in his theories of beauty.

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, with his Aristotelian background, developed a positive perspective on the created world. This appreciation of material world and beauty acts as a precursor to the later evolution of humanism and naturalism in the arts during the Renaissance (Thiessen 2005:59-60).





Figure 11. Interior of Amiens Cathedral, France. Source:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/32952/Western-architecture/47336/High-Gothic?anchor=ref488805>

The themes of the beauty of Christ and Christ as the image of God also continue to feature in medieval thoughts. This is especially manifested in the writings of theologians such as John of Damascus, Theodore of Studios, Aquinas, Gregory Palamas, and Bonaventure. The iconodule theologians, John of Damascus and Theodore of Studios laid the theological foundations for Eastern iconography by defending the image of Christ in Christological perspective. According to them, it falls to impiety to reject the image of Christ because it comes to deny the incarnate Christ who entered to the visible and tangible category by taking on flesh. Against the iconoclasts' accusation of idolatry, they argue that what is venerated is not the material thing but the prototype, the one who an image represents (Cf. Thiessen 2005:68-71). Aquinas associates beauty especially with the Son, the second person in the Trinity. He states that beauty is made up of three criteria – *integritas* (perfection of form), *claritas* (the splendour of proportioned form) and *consonantia* (harmony of proportioned form), and these properties correspond to the Son (Cf. Thiessen 2005:105-106). Gregory Palamas reflects, with reference particularly to John of Damascus, that the mysterious light and beauty of the divine is accessible to



the person whose mind and heart are illuminated by God (Cf. Thiessen 2005:98-99). Bonaventure likewise praises Christ for his extraordinary beauty: “This most beautiful *flower of the root of Jesse* (Isa. 11:1), which had blossomed in the incarnation and withered in the passion, thus blossomed again in the resurrection so as to become the beauty of all” (Quoted in Thiessen 2005:87).

On the issue of the imagination, the medieval theologians were suspicious or negative in general. They mostly regarded the imagination as mimetic, although the descriptions of imagination vary slightly. John of Damascus, who so forcefully defended icons, located the faculty of imagination to the irrational part of soul and equated the imagination with fantasy. For Bonaventure, too, the imagination had only an ancillary function on the contemplative ascent to God. He employed a mirror for a metaphor of it. Aquinas, likewise, identified imagination with fantasy. He affirmed, though, the mediating function of the imagination between mind and body (Cf. Thiessen 2005:62).

A century long iconoclast controversies in the East (c.725-842) also form a part of aesthetics in the medieval period. A vigorous iconoclasm burst out in 730, when iconoclastic emperor Leo III ordered the destruction of icons that had been central to Byzantine worship. However, half a century later, at the Second Council of Nicaea (787), the iconodule position on the veneration of images won the cause based on the incarnation of Christ. The second iconoclastic outburst reemerged two decades later, in spite of the declaration at the Second Council of Nicaea. Three iconoclastic emperors ordered persecutions of iconodule monks and patriarchs. However, by the Fourth General Council of Constantinople (869-870) persecutions were brought to an end again. At the Council, the veneration of images was reaffirmed, and it was declared that the sacred image and the written word of the holy Gospels should be honored on the same level (Cf. Thiessen 2005:64-66).

Finally, the search for the vision of God is a fundamental issue inclusive of all the aforementioned concerns in the medieval church. The medieval theologians expressed directly or indirectly this longing for a glimpse of God here and now

whenever their discussions and contemplative reflections, their poetry and hymns were concerned with beauty, with revelation, with the image of God in both Christ and humans, with the imagination and the defense of images, etc. At the same time, however, various theologians also acknowledged the ultimate impossibility of seeing or knowing anything about God in this world (e.g. Nicholas of Cusa, Meister Eckhart). Thus, the final and total vision of God is suspended to the eschaton, to the world to come (Thiessen 2005:62-63).

In reference to liturgy, art continued to be interwoven with liturgical practices in churches of both the West and the East and the liturgical focus was laid on the sacramental meaning: In the Western Church, the Gothic cathedral is considered a type of the Kingdom to come, a token of heaven on earth. In it, God is present in the light coming through stained-glass windows. In the Eastern Church, on the other, icon mediates the presence of Christ though it is not identical with the reality of Christ.

### **3.2.3. In the Reformation**

Theologically, the Reformation is one of the most significant and highly-charged times in Christian history. Fundamental changes affected the church and theology during this time. In relation to theological aesthetics also, the impact of the Reformation was immense, and the central issue of the day was especially idolatry and iconoclasm. In the late Middle Ages, the popular piety developed towards the intercession of the saints and the belief of the magical power of religious objects associated with them. The sculptures and paintings were considered to be the embodiments of saints, through which and with which one prayed to God for assistance and deliverance. The relics of the saints and martyrs and the objects connected with them were presented to be seen and even touched, and their healing power was assumed. Since the relics were dispersed far and wide among the churches, people went on pilgrimages, seeking the power and deliverance. Indeed, it seemed possible to live a Christian life through pilgrimages and observation of relics, regardless of conduct or comprehension. In the late medieval development, images and symbols became indiscriminate from idolatry (Dillenberger 1987:35). The

Reformers, headed by Luther, saw the need to tackle this issue, so they commented on this, and yet their opinions differed from one another.

### 3.2.3.1. Luther

Initially, Luther was negative to images, on account that images were being used as the object of honor and veneration and that sculptures and paintings were extravagances that churches were indulging in.<sup>26</sup> However, he reconsidered the question of images since he witnessed the iconoclastic riot in 1522 and changed his view into that image itself must not be equated with idol (Cf. Park 2007:102). For Luther, images are basically a small matter because his primary concern was justification through grace by faith. Nevertheless, these two topics are not irrelevant to each other as Luther points out that:

We must preach not merely against this particular misuse or danger, the worshipping of images. That is a very small matter. ... But we must preach against the worst misuse of all, of which the papists are guilty to overflowing. I refer to the fact that they place images in the churches because they think they are thereby doing a good work and a service to God (Luther 1959a:259).

The point of Luther's criticism is not the presence of images, but rather the spirit and reason of installing images in churches that are related to meritorious deeds to God. For Luther, visual images are *adiaphora*, something about which there is no judgment in principle, so one could exercise freedom (Cilliers 2012a:29; De Gruchy 2001:39). They can be either good or bad, but the reason is not inherent in and depends on images themselves. In later chapter of his life (since 1525), Luther even approves images on account that they may be of considerable help in preaching and teaching the good news, i.e. as educational tools. Images of the saints and of Christ and crucifixes should be allowed, as long as they are not worshipped, but used for memorial and witness just like the witness stones of Joshua (Josh. 24:26) and of

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<sup>26</sup> From a social angle, the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century can be seen as a public protest against the luxuries of the church. The elite clerical class lived in luxury at the expense of the lay people. The clergy and church recommended donation of extravagant arts and objects in the name of devotional piety, and they made a large profit through this. In the circumstances, iconoclastic movement arose among people with the cause of redistribution of wealth. It is Karlstadt who can be referred to as a figure of such cause (Cf. Dyrness 2001:54; Park 2007:99-100).

Samuel (1 Sam. 7:12) (Thiessen 2005:126). Works of art, he notes, can also be held for the reasons of pleasure and decoration.

Thereby Luther attacks his fellow Wittenberg Reformer Karlstadt and the Heavenly Prophets, who had started to destroy images in churches in Wittenberg during his absence: “To have images is not wrong. ... we cannot prove it right to mutilate and burn them” (Luther 1959a:259). Luther opines that everything is exposed to misuse and therefore to idolatry; if that is the case, physical removal or destruction cannot be the answer to all the misuse, otherwise we would need to destroy even ourselves. He declares this in one of his sermons:

God has commanded us in Deut. 4 not to lift up our eyes to the sun, etc., that we may not worship them, for they are created to serve all nations. But there are many people who worship the sun and stars. Therefore we propose to rush in and pull the sun and stars from the skies. No, we had better let it be. Again, wine and women bring many a man to misery and make a fool of him; so we kill all the women and pour out all the wine. Again, gold and silver cause much evil, so we condemn them. Indeed, if we want to drive away our worst enemy, the one who does us the most harm, we shall have to kill ourselves, for we have no greater enemy than our own heart (Luther 1959b:85).

From this passage, it is clear that Luther focuses not on the elimination of external matters, but on the fundamentals of faith that keep our life intact. In his eye, the destruction of images cannot be the way to preserve our faith from all the decay. Rather, the destructive activity comes from the same mentality as idol worship, because it is another mode of the belief that images have divine power. In arguing against Karlstadt, Luther distinguishes between external images and internalized idols worshipped in the heart and criticizes that Karlstadt has failed to get rid of the true idols, the idols of the heart. These inner idols we create and desire for ourselves – for instance, mammon, power, good works as means of securing a place in heaven – are indeed dangerous idols we need to destroy. However, Karlstadt, as Luther (1958:84) critiques, “pays no attention to matters of the heart, has reversed the order by removing them from sight and leaving them in the heart”. What really need to be knocked down are not the outward material images, but the false images and idols

residing in the heart.

From the perspective of anthropology, Luther made another important and unique observation on the matter of images, that is, the fact that human beings always invoke (mental) images for comprehending something. Luther (1958:99-100) states:

God desires to have his works heard and read, ... But it is impossible for me to hear and bear it in mind without forming mental images of it in my heart. For whether I will or not, when I hear of Christ, an image of a man hanging on a cross takes form in my heart, just as the reflection of my face naturally appears in the water when I look into it. If it is not a sin but good to have the image of Christ in my heart, why should it be a sin to have it in my eyes?<sup>27</sup>

Imagination is part and parcel of being human. Even if we approach the imageless, indescribable God, this imaginative way is unavoidable. When one hears the Word of God and reflects on it, one cannot but create an image of it in his or her mind. Take note here of how much God has appreciated this imaginative category of human beings in revealing Himself to them. As manifested in the Scripture, we find numerous images and metaphors for God such as King, Shepherd, Father, Mother, Servant, Lamb, Rock, Eagle, Fire, Light, etc. Therefore, we may have images as a form of languages. Images become a necessary and basic human category together with words.

In the thought of Luther and the Lutheran development, proclamation of the Word, the Sacrament, liturgy and the visual have formed a unity. Although a central role is given to the Word, faith is expressed through acts and tangible things. Liturgical and artistic traditions in the past are to be retained so long as they are not found to be contrary to Christian faith and freedom. On this account, the saints and the statues of saints were not basic issues for Luther; if properly understood, they may be cherished not as intercessors but as examples and models of faith. Luther wrote:

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<sup>27</sup> Compare Luther's opinion on mental images with that of the Puritan, which is one of the influences on the Korean Presbyterian churches: In Puritan thought, mental images have been condemned as idolatry. Puritans have applied the proscription of idolatry of the second commandment not only to physical images and types but to mental dimensions of imagination as well (La Shell 1987:311).

Next to the Holy Scripture there certainly is no more useful book of Christendom than that of the lives of the saints, especially when unadulterated and authentic. For in these stories one is greatly pleased to find how they sincerely believed God's Word, confessed it with their lips, praised it by their living, and honored and confirmed it by their suffering and dying. All this immeasurably comforts and strengthens those weak in the faith and increases the courage and confidence of those already strong far more than the teaching of Scripture alone, without any examples and stories of the saints (Quoted in Dillenberger 1987:66).

In this context it is worth remembering that Luther and Melanchton were significantly supported by the painter Lucas Cranach and his workshop. Their Reformation aims and ideas found artistic faces via Cranach's works. Consider, for example, a broadsheet that he designed to support and illustrate the Reformers' ideas (figure 12). In addition to this, the famous Reformation altarpiece by Cranach in the town church in Wittenberg bears testimony to the Reformers' ideas of what it means to be the true church: the preaching of, and faith in, the crucified Christ, and the proper administration of the Sacraments (figure 13) (Thiessen 2005:126-127; cf. Pettegree 2002:470-477).

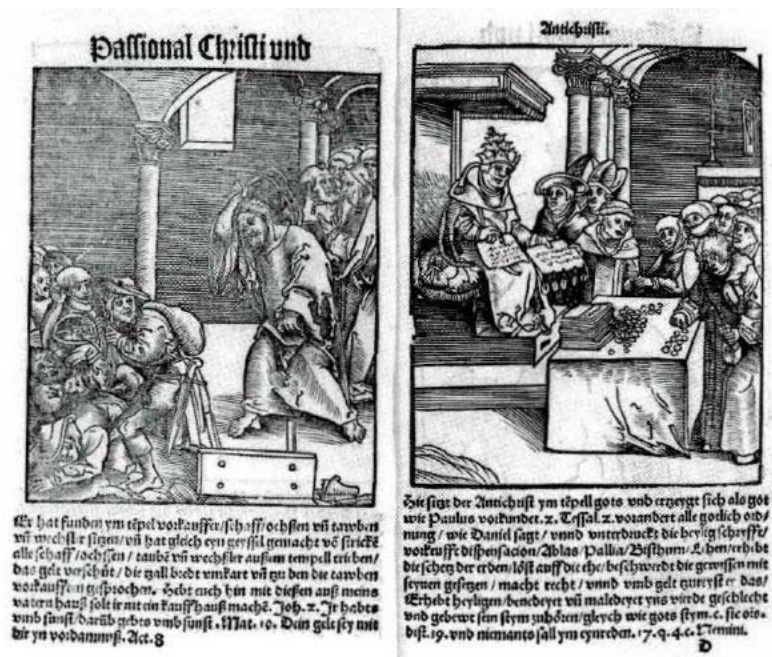


Figure 12. Source: Pettegree 2002:474



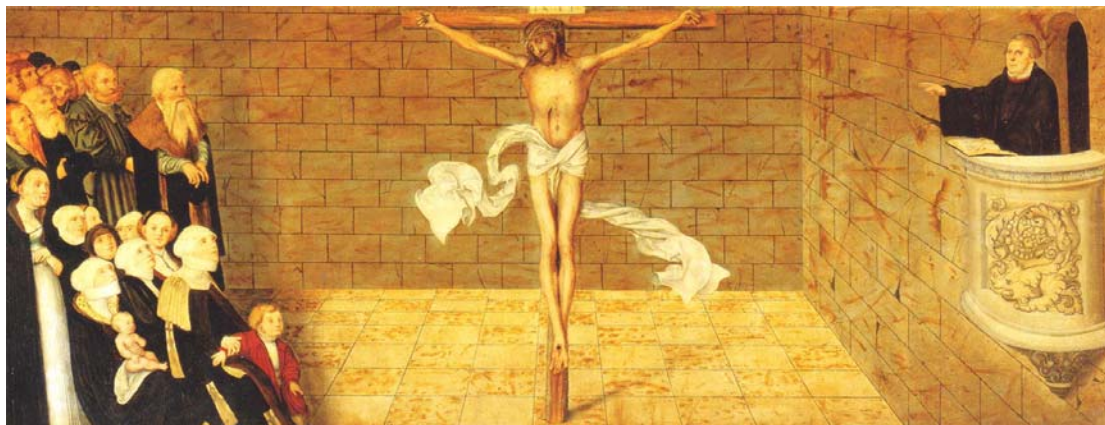


Figure 13. Source: <https://www.artfinder.com/work/reformation-altarpiece-lucas-cranach-the-elder/>

### 3.2.3.2. Zwingli

Zwingli, the draftsman of the Reformation of Zurich, did not only argue with Luther over different understandings of the Eucharist; his ideas on images also formed an opposite extreme to Luther's. He rejects them as teaching aids and insists that we should be taught solely by the Word of God (Cf. Thiessen 2005:135). Zwingli's views of images were anticipated by Andreas Karlstadt and Ludwig Haetzer. Karlstadt,

whom Luther had attacked, had written a pamphlet against images in January 1522. Karlstadt's general view that art was immoral was given in his pamphlet, while his biblical views did not appear prominently. Ludwig Haetzer wrote a pamphlet, a rectification of Karlstadt's in September 1523. This document influenced Zwingli and the Zurich scene. With respect to images, Haetzer made four insistences in the document: Prohibition of images in the Old Testament stands intact; the argument that the saints, not the images are honored, means nothing because nothing stands between God and the human. Therefore, the saints no longer have a religious role; Pope Gregory the Great may have thought of images as books for lay people, but God does not think so; the idea that images help people to be more reverent should be repelled because Christ alone draws people to him and he is responsible for their dispositions. Many of these arguments were adopted also by Zwingli though his concern for faith was even more thoroughly conformed to what he thought to be the dictates of the Scripture (Dillenberger 1987:67).

Like Luther, Zwingli refuted false gods, the gods of the human heart, the temptation to make something God which is inferior to God, belief in one's own goodness, the role of others in salvation and the idle priests who failed to do their duty in teaching the poor simple people, and therefore, let them be astray to trust in images instead. While these views of his were respectable, he remained, though, one-sided as he gave no credit to a positive role images can play. Unlike Luther, Zwingli viewed images as the direct translation of the false gods of the human heart. Images are no more than visual embodiments of the corrupted mind of human beings. The strange gods of the human heart precede and are the basis of images represented visually. For Zwingli, both the false gods of the heart and physical images are idols prohibited in the Scripture, and therefore to be eradicated (Dillenberger 1987:67-68).

Zwingli categorically rejected the presence of any images (and music as well) in places of worship. Although Zwingli himself was a musician, he knew little about art and had such a problem in seeing art, that he abolished visual art, as well as music, in the church in Zurich. Zwingli ordered the systematic destruction of images and statues in the Minster in Zurich in 1524. Consequently, the worship form and the interior and exterior spaces of the church were markedly transformed. "In the white



spaces of Zurich the sermons, prayers, and quiet dignity – the stillness Zwingli prized so much – were characteristic of the services. Music and the visual had disappeared; the verbal carried the faithful in and out of the churches” (Dillenberger 1987:69).

### 3.2.3.3. Calvin

Calvin, a second-generation Reformer, formulates his views on images and art in detail in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. His views may be sketched out in three phases: First, he basically holds iconoclastic position on images. Second, he does not reject all the images. He affirms the aesthetic value of creation and art. Third, with regard to worship and liturgy, however, he makes no room for consideration of images.

In chapter xi of the *Institutes* Book I, Calvin critiques against Pope Gregory the Great, especially his insistence that images are the books of the uneducated. Calvin (2002:71) states that “everything respecting God which is learned from images is futile and false” (I.xi.5). In contrast to Gregory the Great, he maintains that it is through the preaching of the Word that one comes to proper faith: “His [God’s] injunction is, that the doctrine common to all should there be set forth by the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments” (I.xi.7). He further states that if those who had the charge of churches had properly carried out their duty of teaching and worship, it would have obviated the need for images: “by the true preaching of the gospel Christ is portrayed and in a manner crucified before our eyes (Gal. 3:1). Of what use, then, were the erection in churches of so many crosses of wood and stone, silver and gold” (I.xi.7). Calvin awards preaching the prime and exclusive role of conveying the truth. He assumes that the visual cannot specify God as the Scripture can and that the saving knowledge of God in Christ can be conveyed only verbally. People might infer knowledge of God from the visible creation, just as knowledge of an artist or craft worker can be drawn from his or her work, but a higher and more direct way of understanding and communicating with God is preaching of the Word. All in all, Calvin (1998:157) concludes that “even if the use of images contained nothing evil, it still had no value for teaching” (I.xi.12). “He does not seriously consider a possible partnership between words and images”,

Wheeler (2003:355) comments.

Do images then not have any value for Calvin? Does he regard all the images as useless and throw them away? Certainly not! In spite of his little appreciation of images, Calvin eloquently indicates that the beauty of the world is a theatre in which human beings may behold God's glory. He, using the artist metaphor for God, understands creation as something that communicates of its Creator and draws the viewer into the praise and worship of the Creator. The role of creation is thus to play as a witness to the existence of the One who created it, the powers of the Creator, and the character of the One who brought it all into existence as good, ordered, and beautiful (Cf. *Institutes* I.v; Dyrness 2001:53; Wheeler 2003:360).

However, when it comes to worship, Calvin seems to leave no place for the visual. He disapproves the use of images in worship spaces. In dealing with this issue, his entire argument revolves around two axioms: the ontological distinction between Creator and creation, and the human state of falling away from God from which our propensity to idolatry results. The firm distinction Calvin makes ontologically between God and creation means that matter and God do not intermingle. There should be no identification of the created world with God. Images in any medium cannot be divine. Yet, the depraved nature of human beings frequently fails to move from seeing creation to giving praise and glory to its Creator. People tend to confuse matter with God and to remain focused solely upon the creation as an end in itself. Hence, Calvin concludes that it is not expedient, wise, or useful to place images in the churches because of the danger of idolatry (Wheeler 2003:357; cf. De Gruchy 2001:41-42).

Not in places of worship but in secular spaces, though, Calvin concedes certain kinds of art as permissible. He states that the absolute prohibition of images is superstitious because such a prohibition would surely imply a belief that divine power inhabits images. For him, permissible visual artworks are of two classes: They may have as the content things that can be seen – either historical events (including biblical scenes) that have the didactic purpose or objects, persons, and scenes

without narrative context which intend to give pleasure of looking and decoration (I.xi.12). These kinds of works of art may be appropriate and harmless in public square, he utters.

To make some critical evaluation as to the arguments Calvin produced, it should be mentioned first of all that Calvin made his conviction that for the first five hundred years of the Christian history there were no images in places of worship (I.xi.13); but, as demonstrated in 3.2.1, it is not true. By historical and archaeological evidences, now we know that Christians were using images in places of worship in the third century.

Secondly, Calvin claimed that it is only the Baptism and the Lord's Supper that the Lord has consecrated by his word. Calvin gave to the Scripture a central role in determining all matters of faith and worship. If something is not expressly commanded by the Scripture, he regarded it as unnecessary. Unquestionably, the Bible has a central place in the worship of the Reformed churches. Yet in spite of Calvin's contention, the Bible does not contain total prescription for worship, except that it gives essential insights on it in the discussion in John 4 between Jesus and the woman at the well. Furthermore, it would be also arbitrary and excessive to assume that worship of the early church was uniform according to certain biblical prescriptions. Rather it would be more probable to think that there might be diversity in their worship services. Therefore, Calvin's view that what is done in worship must have biblical warrant has a problem in responding to all questions as for worship properly (Wheeler 2003:362-363).

The last and the most critical one is that Calvin treated images and idols as synonymous (Park 2007:105; Wheeler 2003:354).<sup>28</sup> Considering that Calvin was inescapably a person of his time, this is understandable because images in his time

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<sup>28</sup> The identification of images and idols is exemplified also in Heidelberg Catechism:

Question 98: But may not pictures be tolerated in the churches as the lay people's books?  
Answer: No. For we ought not to be wiser than God who does not want His Christian people to be instructed by means of dumb idols, but by the living preaching of His Word (Quoted in Wheeler 2003:349).

had a different implication to ours. Images were seen as literal representations of other realities with inherent powers rather than a language which communicates of the realities. Thereupon, Calvin adopted the second commandment of Exodus 20:4-6 as his governing text, applied it to the church situation of his time, and judged the placing of images in the church in relation to idolatry. However, today, the interpretation of the second commandment might differ from what Calvin did, either with regard to the meaning or with regard to the application. Wheeler (2003:364) states:

In the present context, idolatry is far more likely to be perceived in institutions, secular social structures, and indeed secular images than in anything placed within the church building. It must be acknowledged that human beings are God's creation, that they receive knowledge of the world and themselves through all the senses, and that knowledge of God is available only as God chooses to be accommodated to these created means for self-communication; the faculty of sight cannot be dismissed as having a place in worship.

While taking seriously the second commandment, there is no need to equate an image with an idol in a regular basis. Although there can be a danger of idolatry, the danger of misuse should not vitiate the possibility of a good and proper use of images in the service of religion. It is because, as Wolterstorff (1980:83) notes, "the structure of this idolatry ... is that of a limited good's being treated as an ultimate good, ... not that of something evil's being treated as good". Whether to place images and visual works of art in worship spaces is a question of practical judgment in the light of human factors of the time. Out of the fear of idolatry in his days, Calvin determined that it was not expedient to place images in places of worship and even devaluated image itself. However, today when people are living in a culture of images, images have a very different status from that in medieval period, and it is expedient for the church to explore the possibilities that images have. Communication of the content of faith and worship of God can be enhanced through the use of various visual media (Wheeler 2003:368).

The ideas of Zwingli and Calvin have contributed to the reality that churches in the

Reformed tradition have developed an environment for worship lacking in aesthetic appeal. Generally, pictures and statues are absent; candles are few; crucifixes or crosses are largely omitted.<sup>29</sup> While church buildings in the tradition, especially older ones, might convey an atmosphere of austere grandeur, the stark and simple interiors are of lesser appeal to the aesthetic eye. What truly matters to the tradition is the Word of God, the Word preached and heard by the congregation (McKee 2003:20; Thiessen 2005:125).

### **3.2.4. In the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries**

This period was the time at once of the narrowing of the world, as well as the broadening of the world. In religious terms, the Protestants and Roman Catholic altogether stepped into the era of orthodoxy with little theological development. Though differentiations of Puritanism, Pietism, Methodism came up in addition to the existing Protestant branches, each group was convinced of the truth of its own claims and preoccupied with doctrinal correctness and confessionalism. The Roman Catholic likewise stuck to the determinations of the Counter-Reformation, and was content to employ the dullest of manuals and maintain its opposition to modernity until the late nineteenth century. This era, thus, was one of the least creative in the history of theology, marked by narrow definitions of their own tradition. By contrast, in cultural and social realm, a new awareness of the world around and of the broader context was stimulated by the developments of natural science, frequent travel to the far reaches of the globe, and the Enlightenment. Influenced by these, the formerly theocentric world-view was superseded by anthropocentric views; rationalism was stressed radically; the church and theology were critiqued by philosophical thinkers (Cf. Dillenberger 1987:75; Thiessen 2005:155).

As far as art is concerned, the decline of art in churches came up in this period in aspects of both theory and practice. In theoretical regard, theologians' concern with art and theological aesthetics ebbed drastically, whereas philosophers made

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<sup>29</sup> Stained glass is an exception to these outcasts. Most Reformers accepted stained glass as serving educational purposes, because they believed that it is free from veneration or idolatry on the contrary to relics, sculptures, paintings, and the like (Dillenberger 1987:42).

significant contributions to aesthetics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>30</sup> As a result, most documents relevant to aesthetics were written by philosophers rather than by theologians in this time.

Kant, as a key thinker of the day, paved the way for autonomy of art from other values or purposes (art for art's sake) and beauty divorced from truth and goodness. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant asserts that though aesthetic judgments are subjective, universality of the judgments can be claimed, which is supported not by concepts but by consensus or common sense. Aesthetic judgments are made in terms of seeing in the object a 'purposiveness without purpose', which means that pleasure in the beautiful is disinterested and non-utilitarian. The beautiful is appreciated and enjoyed simply because it is beautiful. It is a 'disinterested delight' in which art serves no other purpose than to provide enjoyment. Consequently, art becomes an end in itself. It does not serve any other end whether religious or moral. It has nothing to do with either dogma or ethics. Art is just to be enjoyed aesthetically for its own sake (*l'art pour l'art*). With this Kantian concept of disinterestedness, what has resulted is the separation of beauty from truth and goodness as well as privatization and secularization of art (De Gruchy 2001:56-58; Thiessen 2005:157).

Jonathan Edwards was an outstanding theologian who concerned himself with

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<sup>30</sup> To mention some figures of philosophical aesthetics, there are Baumgarten, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, etc. As referred to previously, Baumgarten, coining the term 'aesthetics' for the first time, laid the groundwork for aesthetics as a separate discipline.

Hegel, an idealist philosopher, contributed a comprehensive aesthetic theory in modernity. He asserts that *Geist* (Absolute Spirit) realizes itself in history through human consciousness and activity, and its expressive forms are religion through spiritual representation, philosophy in speculative concept, and art in the shape of sensible intuition. For Hegel, beauty of works of art is the manifestation of *Geist* in sensuous form. On that account, he considers beauty in art as superior to beauty in the nature because it is an expression of human consciousness (Cf. De Gruchy 2001:60-61).

Nietzsche wanted to separate aesthetics from ethics and science as Kant did, but for a different purpose. For Kant, it was largely to prevent the aesthetic from controlling reason and morality; for Nietzsche it was to prevent reason and morality from controlling the aesthetic. In spite of the different motives, his idea turned out the same result as that of Kant, viz. beauty disconnected from truth and goodness (Cf. De Gruchy 2001:66).

Kierkegaard regarded the aesthetic experience as the first stage of existence. However, he pointed out that remaining in that stage means that one remains inauthentic as one does not face the reality of suffering in daily life. Artists live an illusory existence as they evade the suffering of reality, according to him. Thus, he emphasizes that one must move from the aesthetic stage to the ethical and religious stage. He maintains that the aesthetic attitude ought to be enjoyed and affirmed, but it should not be seen as a way of salvation (Cf. Thiessen 2005:159).

theological aesthetics exceptionally in this era. In Edwards' interpretation of philosophical and religious themes (God, redemption, evil, human psychology and cosmology), beauty appears as a central and pervasive term. Beauty is a fundamental motif through which he understands the world, God, virtue and all the divine things. For Edwards, beauty is above all the disposition of benevolence, sweet mutual consents and union of heart, which are exercised in general goodwill towards others. In this way, Edwards not only endowed beauty with a moral dimension, but also sharply departed from the idea of his contemporary philosophers, i.e. beauty contrasted with religion and ethics, or truth and goodness. However, in his accounts, aesthetic sensibility and art have not been treated with much implication, though. They were classified as secondary, even inferior, beauty (Cf. Farley 2001:43-48).

In addition to the sparse reflection on aesthetics among theologians, Christian art dwindled practically in churches. Given that the Protestant churches valued the verbal communication of preaching so much, and proscribed the use of art in churches, with the exception of Lutherans, they were not patrons of the visual art any more. Though Christian themes were still painted either for private commissions or out of an inner necessity of an artist, with the hope for a sale, history themes, genre and portraiture increasingly superseded them. In contrast to the decline of church patronage, the autonomy of the artist increased in this time. Annual exhibitions and art markets were established. Leading artists were largely interested in non-Christian themes, while Christian subjects and church art were left to second and third-rate painters and sculptors. The nineteenth century, with its sentimental religious art (often kitsch in fact), was a far cry from the artistic heights of Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Rubens, Bernini, or Rembrandt (Thiessen 2005:155-156).

Baroque artists in the seventeenth century disclosed a religious understanding particularly by depicting the energies and vitalities of the nature and humanity. This world is not to be escaped in favor of another; rather, the world itself is to be depicted in its active transfiguration. In the Roman Catholic side, the Baroque art is exemplified by the works of Caravaggio, Rubens and Bernini. Caravaggio, who did numerous commissions for churches, articulated the Christian subjects in a very lively and expressive style. Note his *Deposition* or *Entombment* (figure 14) for an



example.



Figure 14. Source:

[http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/art/bar\\_cvggo\\_entom.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/art/bar_cvggo_entom.html)

The Baroque in a Protestant form is represented by Rembrandt, who had an association with the Reformed church throughout his life. Among the best known of his paintings is *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (figure 15). The painting certainly exhibits the Protestant consciousness of God's grace without reference to merit. The following is an observation of Dillenberger (1987:94):

[The painting] shows the father accepting the son with a tenderness that does not blink at either the deed or the repentance. The event is simply there, as if father and son existed alone on a new plane. The tender face of the father discloses a graciousness that reaches out to those who see his towering body above the son. The son's face is buried in the father's chest, and the father's hands are over the son's shoulder.





Figure 15. Source: <http://www.drchuckdegroat.com/2009/07/i-will-be-with-you-the-shape-of-gods-relational-engagement/>

Rembrandt was a master of etchings, as well as of paintings. Rembrandt gave considerable time to his etchings, because etchings could be sold more easily at an inexpensive price for the home and the public market, whereas a painting needed a patron. Furthermore, etchings were particularly suited to the Protestant cause, for people were allowed to have works of art in private homes. Private meditation involving works of art was acceptable to Protestants, too, whereas their liturgical use in churches was not. As one of his best known works, *Christ Healing the Sick* (figure 16) shows a kaleidoscopic summary of Christ's healing ministry. Based on Matthew 19, the painting depicts Christ who welcomes the sick, the unworthy, the unimportant, the powerless, and those without merit. This figure of Christ is contrasted, on the one hand, with the Pharisees disputing over divorce, and on the other, with Peter who is trying to keep petitioners and children away (Dillenberger 1987:92-94).



Figure 16. Source: <http://www.masterworksfineart.es/inventory/1641,0>

Additionally, *The Three Crosses* (figure 17) also displays the Reformation consciousness. In the first version of the work,<sup>31</sup> Rembrandt discloses the mystery of the centurion's faith by way of depicting the centurion shocked by recognizing Jesus as the Son of God and isolating him from other figures – both his men who are busy with their soldiers' business and the followers of Christ, who are too intent upon their sorrow for the loss of their human friend, Christ. In the fourth version, however, humanity's disregard for the reconciliation offered from the cross is manifested more expressly: No one seems to be focused on the cross; they concentrate instead on their own confusion. This description illustrates the human condition regarded by the Reformation, i.e. sin and alienation of the humanity from God (Cf. Halewood 1982:128-129, 133).

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<sup>31</sup> Rembrandt revised this etching repeatedly and there is a major difference between the first and the fourth state of the revisions.

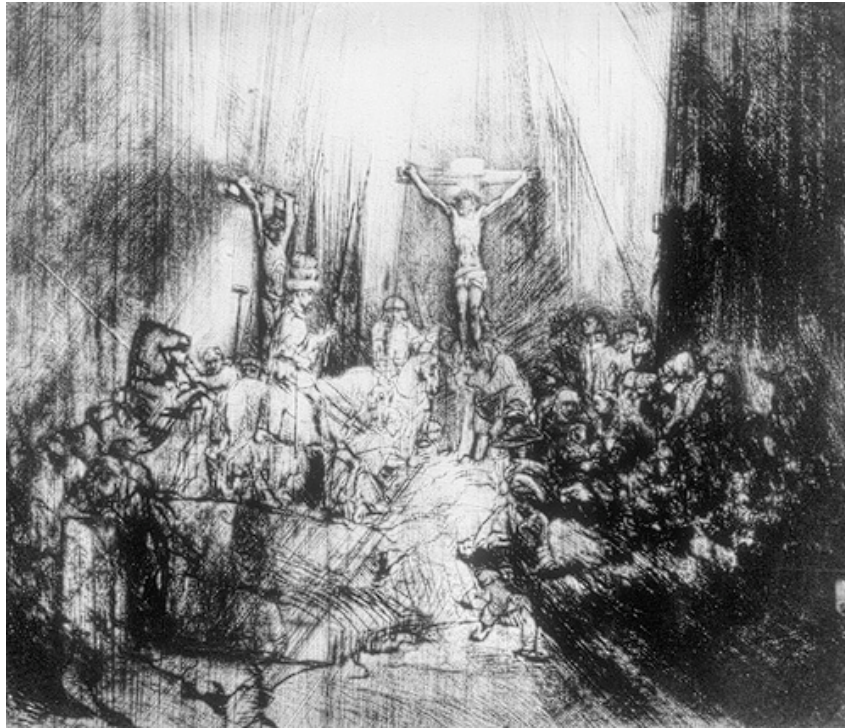


Figure 17. The fourth state of *The Three Crosses*. Source: [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rembp/hd\\_rembp.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rembp/hd_rembp.htm)

Rembrandt, embodying Christian themes and ideas in images, left plenty of splendid artworks. He was the painter of the grace of God, the Reformation spirit. However, his works of art were not liturgical ones or created for a church setting, because art continued to remain outside the church in Protestant tradition. The lasting decline of art in the Protestant is evidenced from the fact that Rembrandt had no successors. Protestantism has not been expressed that well by other painters (Dillenberger 1987:99).

During the period of the seventeen to the nineteenth centuries, the dimension of the sublime also was sought in the arts by the Romantics, who opposed the over-emphatic rationalism of the Enlightenment and stressed the importance of the human emotions, feeling and passion. The sublime means what is awe-inspiring, overwhelming, threatening and mysterious. The Romantic artists tried to express the religious and aesthetic sentiments of infinity and eternity by including into a work of art elements of the fantastic, of melancholy and sometimes of transience and morbidity (Refer to works of the German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich as



an example). Beauty is understood in panentheist terms, which means that the grandeur of the divine is displayed in nature. In this light, spiritual dimensions in the contemporary art found expression increasingly through subject matters which are not religious explicitly (Thiessen 2005:158).

### **3.2.5. In the twentieth century**

The twentieth century was marked by the rapid growth of pluralism whether in theology, art or other cultural domains. Diversification of styles in art occurred as Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, abstract art and conceptual art. In fashion, music and literature also, similar variety has been developed, culminating in the late twentieth century with typically postmodern artistic features, such as pastiche, irony and even cynicism. In theology, this diversity was perhaps not so detectable yet, until roughly 1960. However, since Vatican II, local theologies, ecumenism, and theology in dialogue with other disciplines, especially with the sciences and the arts, have become central issues (Thiessen 2005:203-204; cf. Dyrness 2001:65-66).

In the latter half of the century, various themes pertaining to aesthetics have been treated by theologians. To mention some of the issues and scholars, firstly on art as a theological locus: Tillich made a significant seminal contribution to the arena. He was the first theologian of the century who engaged with the question how autonomous modern art can function as a source of theology. Even though he has been criticized by subsequent scholars of theology and the arts for his somewhat problematic methodology and for his lack of interpreting works of art in detail, there is no question about his pioneering contribution. Little recognized is Rahner's important contribution on the theme. He points out that non-verbal arts must be integrated into the totality of theology together with verbal arts because they are authentic means of human self-expression, of religious experience, of God's self-communication. Hence his claim that theology cannot be regarded as complete until it integrates the arts as an intrinsic moment of itself (Rahner 1982:24-25). The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as well recognized that music and visual art must be fostered in the church. The arts play a vital role not only in theology, but especially in the life of the

church, in liturgy and places of worship. A French Catholic priest Pie-Raymond Régamey is also one of the early proponents of an inclusion of modern works in sacred spaces in the mid twentieth century. He asserts, as Tillich, Rahner and Dillenberger would also argue, that non-Christian artists can give us works suitable for fulfilling their function amply in the church. In this way he raised a central issue: What matters in creating a spiritual or even a sacred work of art is not necessarily the religiosity of the artist, but a sacred character of the actual artistic creation (Cf. Thiessen 2005:223-226). This insight was in stark contrast to what had been done in the nineteenth century when second or third-rate Christian artists were commissioned to do works for the church only for the reason that they had Christian faith. No doubt they were pious, but their art lacked in imagination, intellectual rigor, artistic brilliance, skill and originality, i.e. those aspects that make good art, and thereupon, good theology (Cf. Thiessen 2005:204-205).

Secondly, on the relevance of imagination and creativity to faith: Berdyaev (1950:207ff) stressed that creativity is a virtue of the very existence of being human. God awaits human beings' creative act because it is the response to the creative act of God. Creativity is of religious significance as it constitutes human beings' relationship and response to God. John McIntyre and Garrett Green also have examined the essential role of the imagination in theology. John McIntyre (1987:159ff) presents that imagination is employed in faith and in theology whether we acknowledge it or not. Imagination is not an isolable faculty of the mind but a working of the whole mind. In a similar fashion, Garrett Green (1989:148ff) points out that imagination plays a central role in theology and in the praxis of worship and proclamation of the Word. Both writers note an eschatological dimension that imagination and images have.

Thirdly, on our bodily relationship with God: Moltmann-Wendel (1994:103-105) emphasized the need for a holistic theology, which pertains to the sense perception and integrates the whole personality – spirit, mind and body – on the basis of the incarnate God. Ford (1999:267ff) also takes a holistic view when he discusses feasting in Christian, aesthetic, ethical and ultimately transformative dimensions.

Lastly, on divine revelation and the beauty of God, numerous thinkers have made noteworthy reflections: Von Balthasar emphasized that *pulchrum* (beauty), *bonum* (goodness) and *verum* (truth) are three transcendental properties of being, and they should be understood in their interwovenness as they are inseparable one another (Cf. Van Erp 2004:98-107). Maritain (1974:30ff), echoing Aquinas, stated that God is the Beauty itself and that He gives beauty to all created beings according to the particular nature of each. Artistic creation, therefore, is analogous to and continues God's creation. Küng argues that the artist must continue to address questions of meaning. In this way he opposes the Kantian notion of art for art's sake and opines that the beautiful must not be an "innocuous sedative" but an evocation of the "good made visible" (Küng 1981:38). Similarly, Gilkey (1998:188-192) comments on the prophetic, moral and political roles of art: Art can play a vital role in raising social and religious awareness against a spiritual vacuum in a technical, skill and money oriented culture. In one of the most remarkable works on theological aesthetics in the late twentieth century, Frank Burch Brown critiques the purist notion of aesthetics that claims that whatever is aesthetic is by definition or by nature autonomous and unalloyed from either religion, cognition, morality, practicality, or politics (aesthetics for its own sake). On the contrary, he observes that an aesthetic factor is dependent or conditioned by non-aesthetic factors (religious, moral, political, etc.) and vice versa. Thus, theology can neither adequately understand the meanings, nor satisfactorily interpret the truths of its primary sources without engaging in aesthetics. Goodness and truth are innately associated with beauty (Brown 1989:6ff). Häring (1979:102ff), like Von Balthasar, emphasized the essential connection between the good, the true and the beautiful. He argued that the ethical without a sense of beauty degenerates into joyless, lifeless, and dull legalism. Moltmann (1973:58-64) also stated emphatically that the ethical and the aesthetic intrinsically belong to one another in the life of faith and in our ideas of the divine. Without aesthetic play and joy before God, our obedient life to God's dominion deteriorates into legalism. Joy and the beauty of God are essential to living in Christ and to our vision of God. Harries and Viladesau likewise made corresponding remarks about the issue. Harries (1993:47ff) asserts that true beauty is inseparable from the quest for truth and from moral quality. When an attempt to produce something beautiful is separated from truth and goodness, the result is kitsch, i.e. the distortion of the

beautiful, true and good. Viladesau (1999:183ff) states that art has a place in pursuit of the good insofar as it seeks and mediates beauty, and conversely, the good also must appear beautiful in order to be morally effective.

### **3.3. Conclusion**

In a long history of Christianity from the early Fathers to Aquinas, Edwards to the late twentieth-century theologians, we find that art/aesthetics has 'stood the test of time'. Because of the very power the visual has, the church and theologians were divided into pros and cons and they have conflicted over the issue throughout history. Sometimes, art and images were 'a graceful partner' of theology and the church, but in other times, they were disregarded as 'a dangerous totem'. While iconoclasts objected the visual art and images out of fear of idolatry and got rid of them from their worship space, iconodules utilized them because of the power they have for the devotional and educational purposes.

The Reformed tradition, as a con fraction, followed Calvin's negative viewpoint over the use of art in worship spaces. He, warning of the danger of idolatry, maintained that the verbal explanation is the supreme way of exposing God's truth and mystery hidden in the Bible and in creation. Hence, preaching became the most important part of worship in the Reformed churches and in the Korean Presbyterian churches as well. Indeed, this warning against idolatry is particularly a Reformed contribution for a healthy theological aesthetics because human beings can turn whatever is good and what is given from God into idols. However, a lesson we learn from this historical survey is that a complete avoidance, prohibition or even suppression of the visual is not the right answer to the religious abuse of art and images. On the contrary, what is needed in our visual time and culture, as Dillenberger (1999:191) argued, is "a disciplined theory of images, one that like all our sensibilities belongs to our creation and needs to be learned and cultivated". While maintaining the clear distinction between God and creation, the church should revisit the potential of art, and particularly its liturgical use. The church – especially the Protestant – should rediscover the intrinsic and intimate connection of faith and beauty. God is the Beauty and the source of all beauty. The reality and revelation of God cannot be



contemplated without the dimension of beauty. Without that, we would miss a lot of our faith and life. Indeed, “a sense of beauty in God and in the world makes our theologizing more whole, more exciting, more colourful and vibrant” (Thiessen 2005:208).

## **4. Aesthetics as a theological locus**

Standing on the historical basis of the previous chapter, the question, ‘why should theology care for aesthetics?’ or ‘why is aesthetics important for theology?’ will be asked in chapter 4. Answers to the question will demonstrate not only a valid place of aesthetics in theology but its essentiality for our (liturgical) theological undertaking. This chapter deals also with three key concepts of theological aesthetics and five features of aesthetic expressions in the quest for their liturgical implications.

### **4.1. Why aesthetics is important for theology**

For much of the time aesthetic categories such as beauty, imagination, the senses, the body and art have been a neglected area obviously in the Protestant church and history. These subjects have been considered to have little to do with the Protestant faith as the religion of the Word. However, it is precisely this misconception that I seek to correct in this section. Here, I will present five (theological) grounds on which the necessity or the importance of the aesthetical issues can be contended.

#### **4.1.1. The rediscovery of our bodiliness**

The first ground of aesthetics for theology is to appreciate anew that we are bodies. Christianity is sometimes accused of being contemptuous of the body. Major Christian traditions have tended to neglect the body, tended to view the body’s relevance to our faith as almost deleterious, or tended to relegate it to a mere instrument or an object (Cooey 1994:64; cf. De Gruchy 2001:15-16). The body has not been thought as really a part of ourselves in much of history. However, there is no being human apart from the body and sensibility. What is required, therefore, is a sound somatology that would do justice to the body, avoiding the objectification of it.

In certain periods of the Christian history, theological discussions about the body have taken place as a part of Christology. For instance, the issue of the resurrection of the body came into dispute at the end of the second century. Confronting the contention of Docetism (that maintained that the body of Christ was not a real,

physical body) and Gnosticism (that maintained that salvation meant salvation from the body), early Christianity defended that the body of the resurrected Christ was really a physical body, and the resurrection of the body, which is promised for those who believe, means the salvation of our body in its physical dimension. This idea was formulated in the phrase, '*carnis resurrectionem*' (that is, 'the resurrection of the flesh') of the Apostles' Creed around the year 200, whose authority was generally recognized in the Reformation (Kelly 1960:369). In addition to the issue, more importantly, the debates about the nature of Jesus as the God-man can be considered. Following after a long time of disputes about the divinity and humanity of Christ, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 defined the Christ as truly God and truly human, composed of rational soul and the body (Sigurdson 2008:30-31).

However, despite the debates about the body in early Christianity, the notion of the body has been neglected in most periods of history. It has been considered an obstacle we must subjugate under the reign of mind, or a machine, an object we can control. Sigurdson (2008:25-28) mentions three influences upon the objectification of the body: Firstly, Platonism haunts with the struggle against the body, or the contempt for the body in Christianity. Even though the church rejected the Platonic idea that the body is a prison of the soul, the body was in practice experienced as an obstacle to salvation under the Platonic influence.<sup>32</sup> Secondly, Cartesianism and the intellectual context of the seventeenth century revolutionized especially the Protestant conceptions of the body, so that it was conceived as a lifeless object, constituted by matter under the mechanical and physical laws (Cf. Hauerwas 1998:81). Thirdly, individualization of the modern era also caused the body to lose its communal and existential meaning. In early Christianity, embodiment was not understood to be individual, but rather to be intercorporeal.<sup>33</sup> Each individual body

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<sup>32</sup> Based on the Platonic suspicion of the body, the church for centuries has counted piety or growing toward God as turning away from the flesh, the senses and the external world, and instead turning inward to contemplation. In such kind of thought, the body is the soul's biggest enemy. The earthly parts (the body, feeling and the senses), which are identified with frailties and vices, are placed on one side of a pole in sharp contrast to the spiritual parts of heart and soul on the other. The body and its senses arise and indulge, and it is the duty of the heart, the soul and the intellect to suppress them (Guthrie 2007:100-101).

<sup>33</sup> Weiss (1999:5) characterizes our existence of being embodied as intercorporeality. Our experience of being embodied is not isolated in itself because our bodies and body images are constructed and reconstructed continually by multiple corporeal interactions with other human bodies and nonhuman

was considered to be intimately connected with the church, the body of Christ. This social body was originally understood as a visible and earthly entity, but during the Middle Ages a more institutional and more invisible understanding of the social body replaced the dynamic, intercorporeal, and visible concept of the body. Christianity's losing sight of its social body relegated the concept of our bodiliness to an individual dimension, and eventually the individual body itself has become inconsequential for an understanding of faith which came to mean a mental state rather than a practice. When Christianity has lost the concept of the social body, salvation has become an affair between God and the soul. The body has been lost in the relationship between God and human beings.

The objectification of the body can result either in a neglect of the body or in obsession with it (or, idolization of the body), or both at the same time. The body, on the one hand, has been downplayed in theology, so that the anthropological meaning of our being such as creativity, sensibility and embodiment has been generally distanced from theological concerns. Besides this, the other result of the objectification of the body appears as obsessed interest in the body, or idolization of the perfect body. For instance, the contemporary popular culture advocates the severe disciplining of the body through diets and physical exercises as well as the beautification of the body through plastic surgery in pursuit of the perfect body. Eiesland (1994:116) writes:

[The idea of] the "perfect body" [is] an oppressive myth. [A] fetish for perfect bodies drives people to self-flagellation in overzealous exercise, to mutilation through plastic surgery, to disablement in eating disorders, and to warehousing and stigmatizing people with disabilities, young and old.<sup>34</sup>

The care for one's own health appears more and more to be idolized in our society.

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bodies in the world.

<sup>34</sup> Here, the image of the perfect body overlaps with the philosophy's body in Caputo's terms. He differentiates between what he calls philosophy's body and jewgreek body. Whereas philosophy's body, which is phenomenal in our thinking of the body, is an "active, athletic, healthy, erect, white male body, sexually able and unambiguously gendered, well-born, well-bred, and well-buried," jewgreek body, as a new synthesis of Hebrew and Greek anthropology, represents "disfigured, diseased, unburied, sacrificial, and ashen bodies" (Caputo 1993:194).

In this mentality, all bodily defects, infirmities and flaws are judged to be unacceptable. In other words, they are ones that must be got rid of from this world. Health reigns to be an absolute value and standard in our society. It looks as if everything could be judged or converged on health – physical health, psychological health, relational or affective health, social health, and spiritual health. Being a healthy perfect body is immediately identified with being happy and even with the meaning of life in the society today (Burggraeve *et al* 2003:150-151). This phenomenon of the obsession with the perfect healthy body coincides with Bonhoeffer (1955:107)’s notion of “mechanization of [bodily] life” in terms that the body or the personal being of us is judged in terms of competitiveness, productivity or usefulness.<sup>35</sup> This conception is critiqued by Bonhoeffer as threatening the right of our body, because the body here is understood exclusively as a means to an end (Cf. Vosloo 2006:24-25, 31). The body is being given much attention in our post-modern society, but not always in desirable direction. Considering these results of misconception of the body, we are in need of a theological approach to take our bodiliness into decent account (Sigurdson 2008:28).

Post-Enlightenment, Protestant theology has more often than not turned a blind eye to bodily expressions and sensual aspects for worship – for example, the gestures, the visual art and the liturgical symbols – which were parts of the earlier Christian traditions. However, an anthropological turn has pervaded the study of liturgy since the Second Vatican Council. In compliance with the anthropological change, the role of our body, sensibility and the material world as the extension of our body have been brought into the spotlight. Humanity has been rediscovered as a being of physical and spiritual unity (Lukken 1990:6-7; Cilliers 2012a:72). For a long period of time, religion was primarily viewed as a matter of the mind. The body was undervalued merely as mortal, impulsive, unstable and temporary whereas the words like intangible, spiritual, immortal and stable represented the truly religious (Lukken 1990:8-9). Yet, an innovative vision on our corporality has set earnestly in

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<sup>35</sup> The National Socialists issued the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Ill Progeny in July 1933. The law enforced sterilization of those with presumably hereditary diseases because the National Socialists saw the existence and reproduction of genetic diseases as a danger to the community of German blood and race.

theological studies after the Second Vatican Council valued signs (e.g. Sacraments) perceptible to the senses and the active participation of a whole person in worship highly (Cf. Pamela 2008:115). Because we human beings are not purely incorporeal, spiritual beings, we cannot give meaning to our life or to this world without prizing the bodily mode of our existence – flesh and blood, hands and feet as well as feelings and desires. In practice, our body is experienced not as lifeless, physical object, or as corpse, but as me, myself. Fatigue after a day's work is experienced as the fatigue of myself, my whole being, not just as the fatigue of some parts of my body like head or hands (Sigurdson 2008:34). Likewise, in a sickness, we are poignantly reminded that we are the body because “[w]hen I am sick I am not a mind with a suffering body; I am the suffering body” (Hauerwas 1999:29). Thus, we can say that we ‘are’ bodies rather than we ‘have’ bodies (Cf. Aracil February 2012; Cilliers 2012a:74). McFague (1993:16, 18) states:

The body is not a discardable garment cloaking the real self or essence of a person ... ; rather, it is the shape or form of who we are. It is how each of us is recognized, responded to, loved, touched, and cared for – as well as oppressed, beaten, raped, mutilated, discarded, and killed. The body is not a minor matter; rather, it is the main attraction. It is what pulls us toward (and pushes us away from) each other; it is erotic in the most profound sense, for it is what attracts or repels. It is bedrock, and, therefore, we ought to pay attention to it before all else. ...

Body is the closest bit of matter to us (*it is us*); it is important to us beyond all telling; it gives us the greatest pleasure as well as the greatest pain we experience; it knits us together with all life-forms in networks of shared suffering and joy. In other words, it may be both the most intimate and the most universal way to understand reality.

The body also has relationality. It is a communicative and expressive medium through which we interact with God and other human bodies – and even with the physical world: In a sense that salvation involves the bodily dimension whatever it can and ought to mean, the body first and foremost cannot be excluded from the relationship with God. Second, our personal body can also not be divorced from other human bodies because we are incorporated in human communities. Third, in an ecological outlook, our body is extended to the interrelationship and



interdependence with all bodies, all creatures on our planet (McFague 1993:18). Embodiment is the particular mode of our being related in the world.

The significance of materiality as an integral part of human and natural existence can be constructed on the ground of Trinitarian discussions as follows<sup>36</sup>: Firstly, with the creation of the world and humanity God created physical realities and images (Cottin 2001:304). Generally speaking, there is no mind or soul without the physical body, no invisible properties without the visible dimension in regard to the creation of God. God created human being as a complete composite of the spiritual and the physical. Physicality or the body is fully approved in the creation of God.

Secondly, the incarnation radicalizes the position of the body as an irreplaceable way to the divine. “God is not revealed to us outside the framework of our body-liness – of that Christ himself is the embodied proof” (Cilliers 2012a:73). God took on human flesh. He took on creation itself. He, in the body, interacted with people. “In the body of Jesus Christ humanity is now truly and bodily accepted; it is accepted as it is, out of God’s mercy” (Bonhoeffer 2003:214). The incarnation underlines the biblical principle that the material world created by God is good. God has not alienated Himself from the world, but approved it through the divine kenosis (De Gruchy 2001:123). The Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church appreciate the significance of the incarnation for their liturgical theology and practice. Based on God’s taking on human body, the Orthodox Church believes that the material world becomes a channel to express the infinite. In its tradition, therefore, the icon is cherished to be a means of the access to God while not identical with Him, the prototype. The Roman Catholic tradition, on the basis of the incarnation, sees creation as connaturally related to God. God’s continuing presence in creation is

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<sup>36</sup> When it comes to thinking about the cause for art and beauty, it has usually been the incarnation that controls the conversation (Dyrness 2001:91). This tradition is possibly traced to the church fathers’ writings in which they associated beauty particularly with the Son. For example, Augustine attributes beauty to the Son, who is the exact image of the Father. Thomas Aquinas, inheriting the Augustinian view, associates beauty principally with the Son although he admits that beauty is the attribute of the whole Godhead. Bonaventure, who appreciated the concept of beauty in his theology, also associates beauty with the Word as the splendor of the Eternal Light. Besides them, Clement, Basil and Cyril of Alexandria too, ascribe beauty to Christ (Sherry 1992:10-11). In another way, however, there is a recent current seeking to orientate the discussions of art and beauty not in terms of incarnation alone but in relation of the Trinitarian character of God.

advocated based on the incarnation (Dyrness 2001: 88-89).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit radicalizes even further the significance of the body. The Holy Spirit, as the one who continues the work of the incarnate Son of God, is poured out onto the people, i.e. the body of Christ (Acts 2). “The indwelling of the Spirit (*inhabitatio Spiritus Sancti Internum*) emphasizes the body-liness of God’s revelation – of that the church is now the embodied proof” (Cilliers 2012a:73). The Holy Spirit indwelling in the church and acting through the church represents God’s embodied accommodation to created reality. The Holy Spirit works in and through bodies. The Spirit not only guarantees the bodily resurrection, also reproduces the life of Christ in our mortal body, so that we celebrate and anticipate the full redemption of our body (Cf. Romans 8:11, 23).<sup>37</sup> The Spirit did not deliver Jesus from a body, but rather brought new life to and through his physical body. Likewise in the Christian, the Spirit works not to abolish bodies, but to establish them in the process of our completion and restoration. The body is not an obstacle to the Spirit’s transforming work, but an essential area of that transformation. This affirmation of the body seems all the more plausible if the mind and the body, rational thinking and the senses are as tightly bound together in worship services. The corporeal experience of worship cannot be separated from the arrival and presence of the Spirit in our bodily, human existence. As we offer our bodies in worship, we lay hold of resources that the Holy Spirit may use to transform us into the image of Christ. As we praise and worship God in and through our body and with all our senses, the bodily experience becomes a space in which the Holy Spirit may live and work (Guthrie 2007:102-103, 107).

The body is involved in the drama of salvation, *inter alia* the senses of the body are of massive significance as God is not directly accessible and the salvation does not come to us except through our bodily senses. Anthropomorphic expressions of God – mouth, ears, eyes, hands and feet which often ascribed to Him in Scripture – show

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<sup>37</sup> As regards the correlation between the eschatological presence of the Holy Spirit and liturgy, Lukken (1990:18-19) points out a gripping fact that the Eastern liturgy lay strong emphasis on the ‘already-ness’ of the indwelling Spirit while the Western tradition places stress on the ‘not-yet-ness’ of the Spirit. On that account, it could be somewhat explained why the former utilizes here on earth images of heavenly splendor and of glorious beauty that Christians will share after death while the latter seems to be lacking in that regard.

that He appreciates that we are bodies. Calvin (2002:144) wrote about this: “Because our weakness cannot reach his height, any description which we receive of him must be lowered to our capacity in order to be intelligible. And the mode of lowering is to represent him not as he really is, but as we conceive of him” (I.xvii.13). The anthropomorphic expressions demonstrate God’s willing accommodation to our physical status and limitation of understanding in revealing Himself to us. Not only the body participates in the realization of the self, but it also constitutes the perspective that we communicate, interpret and act on. All the physical senses and theological implications of their criticality to worship need to be appreciated because the different manners of sensing – hearing, seeing, touching, smelling and tasting – are ways for us to relate towards each other and towards God. Certain senses cannot be elevated here as being the noblest over others though we have the history that different senses have been regarded as the primary or most important in different Christian churches – vision in the Orthodox Christianity, audition in Protestantism (Cf. Cilliers 2012a:74; Sigurdson 2008:41). Saliers (1996:14-15) states:

Christian worship is physically, socially, and culturally embodied. Prayer and song constitute the language of the human heart. And knowledge of God is never purely intellectual. The words we speak and hear (or see in the case of signing) depend radically upon the nonverbal languages of Christian liturgical action. Such nonverbal languages involve the physical senses. We must deal, then, with the relations between physical senses, feelings, more complex emotions, and the *sense* of God.

At this point, though, it must be quickly added that the Christian perspective of the body does not necessarily endorse the perfect body that is sustained and marketed by consumerism and commercialization at this day. A Christian alternative image for the body has a different form, challenging the idolized body of contemporary society. It is the body of Christ given and broken for the healing of others (Cilliers 2012a:75).

The body of Christ, first of all, is the incarnate body of Jesus himself born to be broken for our sake in our place. When we speak of Jesus who took on human nature – sinful flesh and human form, we must speak of his weakness and his cross although we may not disregard his divine characters of omniscience and

omnipotence (Bonhoeffer 1978:104). “He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5 NRSV). Only by being broken in his body, Jesus was able to bear and heal the infirmities and sorrows of the broken humanity. His body is shattered and broken to make us whole. Caputo (2006:131) illustrates that as follows:

... by flesh [which means the New Testament body] let us signify everything that is both vulnerable or able to be wounded, which means bent, cut, lacerated, ulcerated, withered, inflamed, paralyzed, numbed, or finally killed, but also healed, bound up, made comfortable and fed, and able to enjoy *jouissance*. These bodies of flesh are attracted to Jesus by an almost natural gravitational pull, and he seems literally to be swarmed by them: they brought to him everybody like that. “[A]nd he cured them.” Surely this is a case of like attracting like, because in the end Jesus ends up as one of these bodies. The one who has become flesh becomes the most famous case of vulnerable, crucified flesh (which is also transformed and transfigured) ...

For a new way of identifying with the physical reality of Jesus, Eiesland also proposes ‘disabled God’ as a reconceived symbol of Jesus Christ: In presenting his impaired hands and feet and pierced side to his disciples,

the resurrected Jesus is revealed as the disabled God. Jesus, the resurrected Savior, calls for his frightened companions to recognize in the marks of impairment their own connection with God, their own salvation. In so doing, this disabled God is also the revealer of a new humanity. The disabled God is not only the One from heaven but the revelation of true personhood, underscoring the reality that full personhood is fully compatible with the experience of disability [either physical or spiritual] (Eiesland 1994:100).

In a similar vein, Ackermann (2001:32-33) too finds a linkage between the violated bodies of those sexually abused, the bodies of people living with HIV/AIDS and the crucified, broken (and resurrected) body of Christ. The presence of and the unity with the broken healed Christ (especially at the Communion table) incorporate us into a hope of healing – a hope for now and tomorrow.

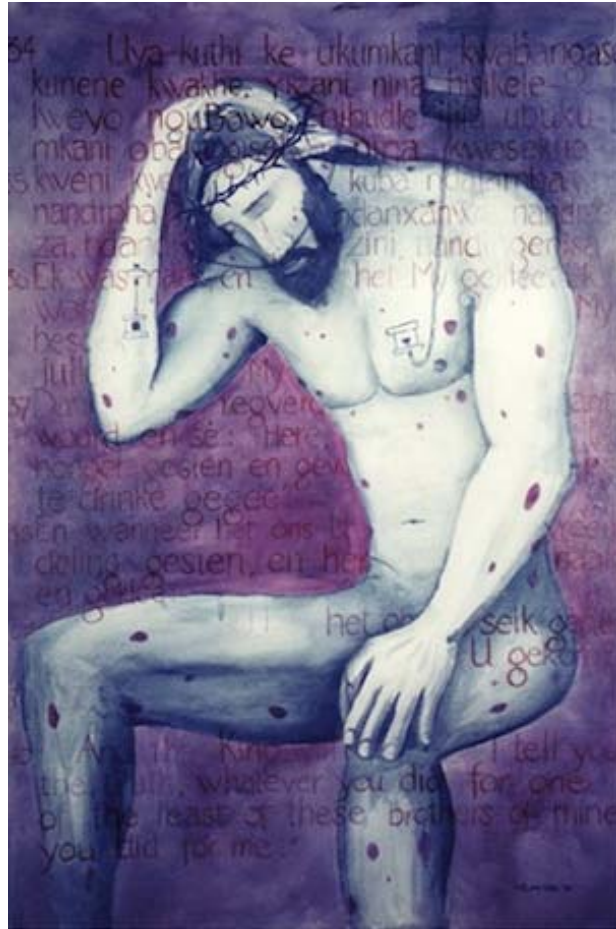


Figure 18. Source: <http://elijahwade.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/the-evolution-of-the-crucifixion-in-art-part-vii/>

In artistic domain, this brokenness of Christ's body is given a specific expression by Maxwell Lawton who is an American artist and AIDS sufferer himself. He created a painting, *Man of Sorrows: Christ with AIDS* (figure 18) during his visit to South Africa. In the painting, Christ is depicted as an AIDS sufferer with purple lesions on his body and linked to intravenous oxygen and feeding pipes. This painting caused quite a stir among people when it was first exhibited in the St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Cape Town in 1994. Many felt that it was sacrilegious and they simply could not recognize this contemporary interpretation of Jesus' crucifixion. However, Spiritual leaders like Desmond Tutu declared that the painting challenges us to reconsider our views on broken people such as AIDS sufferers. It underlines that everyone, even people with AIDS, is included in God's love and no one may be excluded from the church or society. Lawton understood the painting as an icon of hope since Jesus

was made sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21) (Cilliers 2012a:169-170).

The incarnate body of Christ, in another way, creates the visible, bodily church-community. The ecclesial body has been understood, more often than not, as a disembodied and spiritualized entity. But such notion of the disincarnate church is to be criticized for being abstracted from the temporal community of Christians and Christ's presence among them (Cf. Carson 2003:4-5; Cavanaugh 1998:207). This non-real concept of the church is not consonant with the reality of our lives and devalues the fact that the church is the 'body' of Christ constituted with many 'bodies'. In his doctoral dissertation *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer (1998:209-211) deals with this issue more closely. He, rejecting Kantian understanding of the church as non-real and idealistic, claims that the body of Christ is the empirical church actually present in history. He further states that church-community is Christ existing in history even after his ascension.<sup>38</sup> The church-community is called to be broken by taking suffering vicariously to benefit others in following the example of Jesus. Such vicariously representative action of taking suffering, which is carried out by the members of the body of Christ, is itself the very life of Christ who has taken all sin and suffering upon himself for our healing (Bonhoeffer 2003:222). As Jesus' own body was broken for broken humanity, the church is represented as the community following the brokenness of Christ to reach out to the broken society.

In the liturgical aspect, the image of the body as broken reminds us of the Eucharistic body of Christ. Breaking of bread as the symbol of the body of Christ has a characteristic of encompassing all the broken people. In the Eucharistic meal, however, the body does not remain broken. It is also healed, because it represents the body broken on the cross but also the body resurrected. This new reality of the

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<sup>38</sup> On his account of the empirical church, imperfection and sin in the church cannot be irreconcilable to its identity as *sanctorum communio*, namely, holy community. "However questionable its empirical form may be, it remains church in this very form, as long as Christ is present in his word" (Bonhoeffer 1998:211), and he continues: "The very fact that as a sinful community the church is nevertheless still holy, or rather that in this world it is never holy without also being sinful – that is what Christ's presence in it means" (Bonhoeffer 1998:214). The image of the perfect body is challenged again in this perspective. The church consists of imperfect bodies. It has always been a community of imperfect sinners and will be so here on earth.



body brings and promises healing, communion, reconciliation, and reunion of the broken. In this regard, Moloney states that the Eucharist should not be destined only for people who are regarded perfect or worthy, but it should be open widely to imperfect sinners and broken people. He initiates his concern for the Eucharist by indicating a problem that certain people who are assumed to be unworthy of the Holy Communion are excluded from the rite at the level of practice. Is it right, he raises a question, for the Christianity to exclude the broken people, those we judge as sinners, from the Eucharistic table on the presupposition that the Eucharist is a holy celebration done by the holy church for morally holy people? To find a biblical answer to the question, he studies the biblical texts relevant to the Eucharistic meals in four Gospels and the first letter of Paul to Corinth. Then he draws out a basic figure common through all the texts, that is, Jesus present at table with the broken. He manifests in his concluding words that the Eucharist should not be withheld from sinners because Jesus was present not only with the failing and broken disciples of the Gospels, but also “present to the failing and broken disciples of all places and all times: his fragile yet grace-filled Church, in all its brokenness” (Moloney 1990:137).<sup>39</sup>

Thus, to recap the discussions of the body so far, the life of faith is inconceivable without respecting the reality of our embodiment and our bodily sensibility simply because we are bodies. Without the bodily dimensions, worship, the community and the communion with God and others are unthinkable all alike. The bodiliness has won such a cause from the Trinitarian life of God – the creation, the incarnation and the inhabitation. In this light, the physical realities of our individual body, the church community and even the created universe should be appreciated significantly. Particularly, the Sacrament has much implication from liturgical perspective. It calls to our mind the fact that the body belongs to God’s divinity and that the glory of God is present forever in the crucified and risen body of Jesus, the body which, in glory, still bears its wounds (Mitchell 2005a:145-146).

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<sup>39</sup> Although Moloney advocates that sinners and broken people should be included in the Eucharist, it is not right to assume his contention to be a sort of ‘free for all’. He is aware that there are the texts that call for purity in the church community (Cf. 1 Cor. 5 and Hebr. 6:1-8). Therefore, Moloney (1990:134) defends that “those who deliberately and publicly break ‘communion’ (*koinonia*) have no place at the celebration of our eucharistic ‘communion’”. Yet he maintains again that we must not fail to remember though that “the Eucharist is always a gift of the Lord to his failing community” (Moloney 1990:134).

#### 4.1.2. Artistic making as a manifestation of imago Dei

Secondly, creating an image is an inescapable human activity from the fact that we are told in the first chapter of Genesis that human beings are created in the image of the Creator (Cf. Dyrness 1972:169). Though there are various theological ideas about what it means to be created in God's image, yet one aspect of this is clear: Human beings are created to be creative. Only God can create *ex nihilo*, of course, but humans have been given the ability to use imagination, skill, and craftsmanship in a way that no other animals have to create art, to build culture. In these creative activities, we mirror divine creativity. This inherency of creativity in human nature has been demonstrated throughout the history. From early cave wall drawings to the most abstract contemporary art, humans have expressed themselves imaginatively. Because there is more in human experiences than words can express, people have given themselves to artistic expression as the natural formulation of the unspeakable aspects of their existence. Creating artistic expression is simply doing what humans have been created to do. Being creative is fulfilling the essence of human capacity (Schmit 2002:21).

We, as image bearer of the creating God, are given the gift of creative imagination, which enables artistic creation. In an activity of the imagination – bringing something in mind into being by utilizing mentality, technical craftsmanship, materials, shapes, sounds and words – we humans act most godlike. Listen to Horne (1995:84)'s remarks:

It [artistic creation] is an experience of release from the constrictions of the self. This transcendental experience gives content to the belief that man is made in the image of God. ... [I]t is of particular significance for us as we consider the human being's capacity to create 'secondary worlds' by art and craft. It implies that the human being is *necessarily* a creator, ...

Art is not a luxury or gratuitousness to be relished only when we have time for leisure. Although it can appear to be an unnecessary surplus because it is not so much a vital condition for survival as eating, drinking and sleeping are, it is essential to human beings and a character distinguishing the human from the rest of the created

order. George Steiner, when he argued for the necessity of art, asserted his concept of 'absolute freedom' which means that human beings can choose not to create while still remaining in being human. He contended that it is the very freedom not to create that gives autonomous force to create artworks. Paradoxically, Steiner justified artistic creation on the basis of the freedom not to create. However, Horne criticizes Steiner's concept of absolute freedom on account that (making) art, then, becomes nothing more than an illusion. He critiques that Steiner's argument is a paradox because he denies the transcendent reality in art by claiming the 'absolute freedom', even though he seems to acknowledge the presence of otherness or transcendence in art. Objecting to the concept of absolute freedom, Horne states that absolute freedom belongs to God alone. He is the transcendent One who has the freedom not to create as well as to create. By contrast, human beings have only relative freedom and are subject to the necessity of creating activity. The existence of human beings and their impulse to artistic creation are anchored and conditioned on this relative freedom. In other words, we may not choose not to create if we are to be human (Horne 1995:84-86). In a profound sense, aesthetical expression is an inevitable manifestation of the *imago Dei*. (Cilliers 2012a:69).

Another issue that needs our serious consideration in terms of *imago Dei* is the inspirational work of the Holy Spirit in artists. Sherry (1992:2) states that the Holy Spirit communicates God's beauty and glory to the world through two forms of divine agency, viz. the creation and the inspiration. From the perspective of God's providential work of the common grace, the Holy Spirit adorns, perfects, tends and preserves creation, so that earthly natural beauty participates in the beauty of God and reflects it in some way. Concerning this, Jonathan Edwards also formulates his idea in the same tenor. Developing his discussion of aesthetics in Trinitarian theology, Edwards attributes the work of communicating beauty to creation to the Holy Spirit. Delattre (1968:183) quotes Edwards' comments on Gen. 1:2 as follows:

It was more especially the Holy Spirit's work to bring the world to its beauty and perfection out of the chaos; for the beauty of the world is a communication of God's beauty. The Holy Spirit is the harmony and excellency and beauty of the Deity, as we have shown. Therefore, 'twas his work to communicate beauty and harmony to the world, and so we read that

it was he that moved upon the face of the waters.

As in the creation of the world, the Holy Spirit inspires and moves in spirit of human artists when they are doing artistic creation. Thereupon, the artworks – painting, statue, music, dance, poem and film whatever the form might be – may become an expressive form of divine radiance of beauty, goodness and truth. Artists “consider commitment to and faith and truthfulness in their work to be central to their lives as artists. It is precisely in the free choice and treatment of an explicitly or implicitly religious subject, or even of a non-religious theme in a work of art, that such a ‘real encounter’ with the divine, with the Spirit, may have given rise to the production of the work, and/or is felt by recipient” (Thiessen 1999:266-267). Inspiration<sup>40</sup> is “the way in which God through His spirit lets us share in His creativity” (Sherry 1992:113). This is shown nowhere more conspicuously than in Handel’s experience when he composed *The Messiah*: He wrote the oratorio in three weeks in the experience like being possessed or visited by God. Thereupon, he refused to accept any money for the performances of it because he felt that it was not he who really had composed it. The Holy Spirit inspires people to communicate God’s salvation in the case of biblical inspiration. Furthermore, the Spirit prompts and energizes us to imitate the creativity of God in an act of artistic creation (Sherry 1992:131). The Holy Spirit drives us to create. By acting in and through our creative capacities, the Spirit furthers the creation.

On account that the one who drives artistic creation is the Holy Spirit, here we need to note specifically an eschatological implication of art. Because it is the

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<sup>40</sup> Theological treatments of inspiration have been largely confined to biblical inspiration. While the authority of Scripture being an important issue for nearly two centuries, theologians have often dealt with it in a cognitive way. They have viewed it as divine dictation, or as an illumination of the mind. Secular thinkers, on the other hand, have regarded inspiration as a psychological issue, presenting it as the sudden break-in of good ideas which is apparently unconscious happening (Sherry 1992:112). However, both treatments of inspiration are inappropriate because they have narrowed down the concept in limited scope. The Bible rather introduces to us a wide usage of the term ‘inspiration’: It is used of the creation (Gen. 1:2; 2:7); outstanding endowments such as Samson’s strength (Judges 14:6), the skill, perception and knowledge of the craftsman, Bezalel (Exod. 35:31); the inspiration of prophets (Num. 11:25; Ezek. 11:5); creating a new heart in the stubborn humanity (Ezek. 36:26); the charisms and fruit of the Spirit listed by Paul (1 Cor. 12:8-11; Gal. 5:22); and the guidance of the early church (Acts 8:29; 9:31; 13:2). When used of the inspiration, it usually relates to the way in which God through His Spirit works in the world (Sherry 1992:119).

eschatological destiny which the Holy Spirit drives the world to, all real artistic creations point to the eschaton in some mysterious way. Art that bears the imprint of the Spirit anticipates substantially, though provisionally, the final renewal of all things, the final transfiguration of the cosmos (Dyrness 2001:94).<sup>41</sup> Even non-Christian artworks also, in this perspective, can be asserted to participate in disclosing God's existence and His glory although they seem to point to the absence of God and of His glory. Given that such works (if they are genuine) portray the pain and anxiety that artists perceive in the radical disjunction between what is and what could or should be, it can be claimed that they point to something larger than the temporary finite reality and its ultimacy by way of negation (Horne 1995:91; cf. Dyrness 2001:101-102). Art does not bring salvation immediately, but it can serve to open up the story of people on eschatology (Cottin 2001:306).

To summarize the discussions thus far: Aesthetical expression is an inevitable consequence of being created in *imago Dei*. We have a drive to externalize, a compulsion to express, to symbolize and to embody the mental and emotional energy in concrete forms. For human creativity is a reflection of the self-expressive energy that inheres in God: God the Father who created the human in the image of the creating God; the incarnate Son who became the self-manifestation of God in flesh and blood; the Holy Spirit who continue to inspire human agency in order to communicate the divine beauty, truth and goodness until the end of time (Cf. Horne 1995:86).

This inevitability is exemplified throughout all the time of human history in all the way of living and religion. In the Christian history, believers have employed artistic forms to express their deepest existential questions concerning God and faith since the early age of the church. A wealth of artworks – paintings, statues, pieces of music, architectural buildings and even the poetic languages of prayer – have been playing a role as gateways to the experience of God and means to celebrate the beautiful creation of God. Art/aesthetics is everywhere around us, and needless to say, in our worship service as well. Even in the simplest worship service of the Puritans who

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<sup>41</sup> As for this, further discussion will be given in 4.3.5.

fervently engaged in a war against the use of any form of art in the worship service, art exists: Just note what an eloquent word-artist a Puritan preacher is. Puritan preachers' sermons are mostly adorned with the verbal art. If you attend any worship service or walk into any church building of the Reformed tradition, you will surely be confronted by aesthetics – an architectural type of the building, a set manner of liturgical practices. Whether we want to admit it or not, we can neither live, nor worship God without art. It is part of being human (Cilliers 2012a:70).

### 4.1.3. The integrative characteristic of neuro-cognition

The third ground of aesthetics for theology is a bit more neurological one. As a neurological given, we “think in images”, that is, we “process information *imaginatively*” (Cilliers 2012a:102). The generally assumed theory of left-brain or right-brain dominance categorizes people into ‘left-brain’ or ‘right-brain’ type. According to the theory, the right hemisphere of the brain is associated with the abilities such as recognizing faces, expressing emotions, music, reading emotions, color, images, intuition, and creativity. It is known as to be the best at creative and artistic tasks. On the other hand, the left-side of the brain is regarded to be proficient at tasks that involve logic, language and analytical thinking. The left-brain is often described as being better at language, logic, critical thinking, numbers, and reasoning. However, this lateralization of the brain is an overgeneralized and exaggerated distinction. The brain is not so much dichotomous as once alleged. Recent research<sup>42</sup> has shown that abilities in the subject of math are actually the most efficient when both halves of the brain work together. The neuro-cognitive systems of our brain function optimally if they collaborate with each other in an integrative way (Cherry n.d.).

The integrative characteristic of neuro-cognition lodges justifiable association of images and words (or, of liturgy and preaching). Words carrying images, viz. imaginative languages allow us to reach deeper layers of meaning and experience which we could never have accessed with words that simply deliver abstract

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. O'Boyle, M 11 April 2004. *The brain's left and right sides seem to work together better in mathematically gifted middle-school youth*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2004/04/interhemispheric.aspx> [19 July (2012)]



concepts logically. Consider a huge difference between the following two sentences: 'Those who have a little knowledge usually talk the most and make the greatest fuss' and 'Empty vessels make the most noise'. The first phrase you just hear, but in the second you see as well as hear. Words are better when fuelled by images!

As a possible instance of the integration of image and word, metaphor comes into view. Metaphor is an imaginative and sensory language. It secures images and sense-data. By way of offering a stereoscopic vision in our minds, a metaphor gives us an imaginative understanding of a matter. Characteristically, a metaphor functions in a way of creating tension between two entities and bridging the gap. By building a bridge between the matter referred to and an image, it provides imaginative access to the matter. It provokes new perspectives and insights by laying a known alongside an unknown. In the tension created between these two, the ordinary things of life are reviewed in an extraordinary way; our reality is redescribed; we are able to comprehend the meaning of a matter freshly, and even deeply (Cf. Vos 2007:22-23).<sup>43</sup>

Metaphor is the basis of all human communication. It is "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:3). Whereas in the old substitution theory metaphor was seen as a trope, a decorative word that is discarded once the idea has been grasped, metaphor is now understood as an inherent process of human discourse and communication (Wilson 1991:14). Especially, the mode of metaphorical language is of absolute necessity when we are trying to discourse about God. Because the ontological being of God not only eludes but exceeds our grasp and description of languages immeasurably, all our languages about God cannot help being metaphorical.

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<sup>43</sup> Metaphor is the language that can best express eschatological anticipation because of the tension and space it creates. In the tension between the known and the unknown; between the already (presence) and the not-yet (absence); between our reality and another reality to come, the process of disorientation/reorientation takes place and new ways of understanding our reality are opened (Cf. Campbell & Cilliers 2012:189; Cilliers 2012a:185-186; Wilson 1991:14).

Imaginative languages are a homiletic necessity in an aspect that preaching is a form of art, i.e. the word art. However, Korean preachers have been influenced by teacher-pastor model of the Reformed tradition for long, a lecture-like style and the didactic aim prevail in their preaching. Then, their languages in preaching easily resort to discursive, rational and prosaic vocabularies. Of course, the principles such as the rational clarity of argument, the logical outline, etc. are still remaining helpful for preachers. But, in order to communicate effectively, preachers need to translate the rational, conceptual vocabulary into the language of images – the language to which people can respond more readily. As one might argue, preaching is a form of art that evokes holistic mode of knowing. It speaks to thoughts, feelings, sensation and intuition – to the holistic being of human. Therefore, it is just and proper to take much account of the challenge for preachers here: You should better utilize every possible way, whether it be a story, metaphor, image-rich words, structural devices of sermon or the like, in order to engage people in experiencing the weight of divine beauty, goodness and truth ‘holistically’ and ‘bodily’ (Reiersen 1988:104-105, 107-109; cf. Troeger 1990:28-30).

#### **4.1.4. The Bible as book of images**

Fourthly, art and aesthetics are endorsed from the fact that the Bible itself is filled with images, symbols and imaginative languages (Cottin 2001:304; Troeger 2007:63). The Scripture, at first glance, appears to provide little support in cultivating an affirmative view of art and aesthetics. It is generally believed that the primal interest of the Scripture is the salvation of human ‘soul’ and that its thrust to spirituality instructs us to avoid any dependence on images because they are potential idols. The biblical emphasis is assumed to be laid on the dangers not the advantages of visual images. Dyrness states that this understanding of the Scripture is a Protestant heritage, rather than a result of attentive reflection of the Scripture. He continues to say, “In the Protestant tradition, hearing the Word of God and following that Word was believed to make all visible assistance unnecessary and even hazardous” (Dyrness 2001:83).

It is the second commandment that is usually referred to as the basis of rejecting the

use of visual art and imagery for religious purposes: “You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God” (Exod. 20:4-5 NRSV). It was the governing rule, for instance to Calvin, with regard to idolatry and to locating of images in worship spaces. However, Wheeler critiques that Calvin was inextricably a person of his time in terms that he equated image with idol, applying the second commandment to the situation of his time. Wheeler opines that we should undoubtedly take the second commandment seriously, but that it is not a matter of course to identify images with idols as Calvin regularly did. Although he viewed the second commandment as the justifiable basis of the Bible to drive images out of the church in his vigilant war against idolatry, the interpretation or the application of the commandment in the present context can possibly differ from that of Calvin.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it can be argued that the second commandment is not meant in principle to outlaw the attempt to portray religious truth imaginatively while it is clearly concerned with false worship. “The line is drawn between God and idols, not between God and images” (Dyrness 2001:83).

In connection with this point, Latour particularly offers us an insight to read the second commandment differently. He states that the iconoclastic interpretation of the commandment is incompatible with the mediation of images which is essential in human culture.<sup>45</sup> We cannot do without images, intermediaries, mediators of all shapes and forms, according to him, because they are the only way to access God, nature, truth and objectivity. Images have an ambivalent nature: They attract so much hatred, on the one hand, just as iconoclastic destruction is drawn, but they always return again, on the other, no matter how strongly one wants to get rid of them. In light of the fact, Latour claims that there is no way to obey the second commandment because no truth will be accessed without images whether in the domain of faith, science or art. Then he asks: “Are we sure we have understood it

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<sup>44</sup> Concerning the viewpoint of Calvin and other Reformers on image and idol, refer again to 3.2.3

<sup>45</sup> In Latour's thinking 'image' is a broad concept. It does not only include the visual image, but also writing, rites, music, words, concepts, pictures, descriptions – in short 'image' comprises cultural expression as a whole.

[the second commandment] correctly? Have we not made a long and terrifying mistake about its meaning? How can we reconcile this request for a totally aniconic society, religion, and science with the fabulous proliferation of images that characterizes our media-filled cultures?" (Latour 2002:18). Though the commandment is inexorable: 'Thou shall not make a carved image for yourself nor the likeness of anything ...', Latour attempts to sort out the paradox of the inevitable creation of images by pleading for not presenting images as stills, not freezing them, nor destroying them, but keeping them in motion. Thereupon, he rephrases the second commandment as follows: "Thou shall not freeze-frame any graven image" (Latour 2002:37). What he thinks we should stand against is not an image itself, but an image out of movement, an isolated, freeze-framed image of which one remains in the fascinated contemplation. Images do count. They count because human beings have no other means for grasping reality, sanctity and truth but images.

#### **4.1.4.1. Biblical languages for art and beauty**

While the Scripture provides the resources for developing a Christian outlook on aesthetics, the first one of them is the terms carrying the meaning of art and beauty. Yet, meanwhile, part of the problem in understanding their biblical concept is that there is no Hebrew word for art and beauty in the sense used today. This is the reason why it is said that the issue of the beautiful is of no concern to the Old Testament and that art is evaluated as lower in biblical religion. However, for the Hebrew, beauty was not a discrete or disparate part of their lives. In a sense, it was 'nothing special' because "it was meant to be a reflection of the ordered meaning of God's good creation" (Dyrness 2001:70). Beauty is the splendor of the totality of the created order. Hence, often the words we might call beautiful are best translated as 'fitting' or 'good'. Dyrness (1985:423-426; 2001:70-73) illustrates the seven Hebrew word groups representing the meaning of beauty and art. A brief introduction of them ensues as follows:

1. The Hebrew word *tsebi*, which means 'beauty' or 'honor' (also refers to gazelle), appears eighteen times in the Old Testament. In this sense, beauty is a quality that earns the admiration of others, or the cause of inappropriate pride, thus

deserving God's righteous judgment. Or, it can also refer to the final Kingdom, the perfection of Canaan's goodness, Zion, or the New Jerusalem (e.g. 2 Sam. 1:19; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 3:19; Isa. 4:5).

2. Words related to the verb *hadar* mean 'honor' or 'glorify'. They appear thirty-seven times in all forms. These words are applied to honor characteristic of God or the king. When used in reference to God, this character of glory appears as the visible expression of his power and holiness (e.g. 1 Chron. 16:27; Ps. 104:1; Ps. 8:5; Ps. 29:2).

3. The verb *pa'ar* used thirteen times means: 'to glorify', 'to crown', or 'to beautify'. This word implies making something into an object of adoration or praise, or to give it a place of honor (e.g. Ezra 7:27; Judg. 7:2; Isa. 49:3). The related noun *tip'arah* appears forty-nine times and means 'ornament', 'splendor', or 'glory' (e.g. Exod. 28:2; Ezek. 16:12; Esther 1:4; Prov. 16:31; Isa. 61:10; 1 Chron. 29:13; Isa. 28:5; Isa. 46:13c).

4. Words associated with the verb *hamad*, meaning 'to desire' or 'to delight in', conveys the implication of desired beauty as they often refer to a desire that sparks the intention of obtaining the object for oneself. This can have a positive sense, as with the trees in the Garden that God created for delight (Gen. 2:9), or the delight one feels for one's beloved (Song of Sol. 2:3), or the mount God desires for his dwelling (Ps. 68:16). But it can also refer to the desire for what is forbidden, as when Achan coveted in gold (Josh. 7:21), or when the rich coveted the fields of the poor (Micah 2:2). The nouns derived from this word usually refer to what is pleasant or lovely and therefore precious, such as the land God gave to Israel, or stones or precious vessels (2 Chron. 32:27). While this beauty may be dangerous, it is clear that God does not despise it.

5. Words associated with the verb *yafah*, meaning 'to be fair or beautiful', appear over sixty times in all forms. These words usually refer to the outward beauty of a person or, less frequently, an object (e.g. Gen. 12:11; 39:6; Esther 2:7). They are

also used to describe the beauty of God's presence in Zion as well as God's people in the last days (e.g. Ps. 50:2; Zech. 9:17). This word group also especially appears frequently in wisdom literature, where it indicates the highest perfection that God's good creation can reach (Eccles. 3:11).

6. Word group of the verb *na'ah* is especially associated with what means 'fitting'. The word can describe the physically attractive (Song of Sol. 6:4), but more often it means what is suitable to a given situation or context. Praise 'suits' the righteous (Ps. 33:1), holiness 'belongs' in God's house (Ps. 93:5), and the feet of the evangelist are 'lovely' (Isa. 52:7). On the contrary, lovely words, a fine house, or honor are not 'suited' to a fool (e.g. Prov. 17:7; 19:10; 26:1).

7. Words related with *na'em* depict what is 'pleasant' or 'lovely' in a general sense as the Promised Land in Gen. 49:15, words in Prov. 16:24, the places the psalmist is able to enjoy in Ps. 16:6. When used in reference to a person, it refers more often to one's character than one's appearance (e.g. 2 Sam. 1:26; Ps. 133:1; 16:11; Prov.24:25).

Turning to the New Testament, the only mention of beauty in the narrow sense appears in Philippians 4:8: *prospiles* meaning 'pleasing' or 'lovely'. Additionally, *kalos*, meaning 'good', is used to indicate beauty but it does not mean beauty in the narrow sense. It is always used in moral (and even theological) relation. It is applied to good fruit (Matt. 3:10), or a good seed (Matt. 13:24); Christ is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), and every creature of God is good and to be received (1 Tim. 4:4).

From this brief review of languages in the Bible, Dyrness (2001:73-74) draws biblical implications for art and beauty as follows: Firstly, the Bible provides theological foundation of art and beauty. God is the source of all beauty. God Himself is the Beauty, and by extension, creation bears the mark of His beauty. Secondly, conclusively from the first implication, the created order is not disregarded in the Bible. Simply note that the same word of beauty is employed in reference not only to God but also to the creature. Created beauty of the material world functions as a



theatre in which the beauty of God is displayed, and so deserves to be enjoyed. Thirdly, the biblical language of beauty is unique in its integrative characteristic. Because God has made the world and takes care of it according to His purposes, all values are ultimately related to the purposes. Beauty is inherently interconnected with goodness and truth as the language of beauty is frequently placed in the ethical context in the Bible. Beauty is never autonomous.<sup>46</sup> Finally, beauty has an eschatological dimension. The fullness of beauty will be only experienced in the eschatological future. And in the sense, earthly beauty points toward and anticipates its completion as in the prophets' reference to beauty of the new-coming reality.

#### **4.1.4.2. Images in the biblical narrative**

Secondly, images are spread over the larger picture of biblical narrative. If it can be claimed that what God does to human beings and to the world is beautiful, then the story of the Bible is something that demonstrates the beauty of (the acts of) God. Dyrness (2001:75-80) elucidates some key images of the story line as follows:

The creation itself provides an important starting point for the consideration of the place of beauty in theology, given that it is within creation that the invisible God makes his eternal qualities visible to humanity. The creation is the event filled with God's beautiful acts. While creating the world, God made an account every day that it was 'good' (*tob*), and possibly its meaning would be that creation is not only visually lovely, but in a condition of God's order and purpose as well. Mitchell (2005b:349) observes accordingly that "Vision has played the role of the 'sovereign sense' since God looked at his own creation and saw that it was good". Yet, it must be added to this that the beauty (or goodness) of creation is not a fixed quality. Possibly, something that would enlarge its splendor could happen in creation. Or, it is possible for something in defiance of God's will to happen to spoil its beauty. Beauty is thus a vulnerable quality wedded with other values. Beauty can move us to praise the Creator, but it can also entice creatures to exist on their own detached from God. Consider the instance when Adam and Eve were drawn to the beauty of the tree and took it against the moral instruction of God, they deteriorated beauty into an idol.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. 4.2.1 and 4.3.4 for the integrative characteristic of art and beauty.

Without reference to the Creator, beauty and goodness are easily dichotomized.<sup>47</sup>

In Exodus, God's deliverance is displayed with more abundant images. When God rescues the Israelites from the slavery and leads them through the sea and wilderness to the Promised Land, He exhibits his power and presence with the pillar of fire and cloud. When Moses ascends the mountain, God meets him in smoke, thunder, lightning and earthquake. The power and holiness of God are demonstrated with visual display and magnificent impact.

The tabernacle (or, temple in later development) is another quintessence of the Old Testament aesthetics. God's Spirit inspires Bezalel and Oholiab with craftsmanship and artistic talents for the special task of making and furnishing the tabernacle. Here, their artistic talents are endowments from God's Spirit. Those who might be called artists today worked in order to make an appropriate space for worship in areas of craft, architecture, design, vestments and even incense – things that incorporate the senses. The tabernacle and the temple are the places in which God's visual glory abides. They represent God's presence. On this account, going up to the temple appears as a visual metaphor for going up to God (e.g. Ps. 122).

In the Prophets, the beauty often appears in association with the Day of the Lord. Our experiences of beauty (of goodness and truth as well) are influenced by sin in the present world, so that they are distorted in a way that beauty drifts into aestheticism (idolized beauty) or they are degraded to just carnal appetite in contrast to the concept of noble spirituality. However, beauty is to be revealed and experienced without blemish in the coming future. The beauty of Jerusalem and of God's people is expected to come to its fullness in the Day of the Lord. In that day Israel will be a "crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord" (Isa. 62:3 NRSV). Beauty in this sense has an eschatological reference.

This imagery of beauty and glory in the Old Testament is carried over to the New Testament and sees its culmination in reference to the coming of Jesus Christ. John,

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. 4.2.1 as regards coherency of beauty, goodness and truth.

associating Jesus' coming with the creation in Genesis, writes that Christ who became flesh and lived among us is the true light, which enlightens everyone, and that we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth (Cf. John 1:9, 14). The incarnation of Jesus Christ indeed is the beautiful manifestation of God's love and glory.

Jesus' ministries (his words and deeds) are also full of images and symbols. In his teachings, Jesus frequently used imaginative languages like metaphor, parables and stories. The good shepherd, the door of the sheep (John 10), the vine (John 15), etc. are the descriptions Jesus used to communicate certain truths of himself. In the announcement that the Kingdom of God is at hand, he did not offer objective and analytic explanations of what the Kingdom is; rather, he used parables, analogies and metaphors to describe what it is 'like'. Furthermore, the event of his cross is absolutely the most crucial symbol among his ministries. The cross, which used to be a symbol of human cruelty and evil, has now become a symbol that stands for both the ugliness of our sin and the beauty of God's redemption and reconciliation. Thereupon, the cross has inspired many great artists in history and become a theme of their great works of art.

After the ascension, the visual presence of God with his people is subsequently manifested in the Pentecost. The pour-out of the Holy Spirit and his empowering of the church to spread out the gospel are accompanied by powerful signs. In continuing the work that Jesus began, the Holy Spirit works until the splendor of creation is recovered to the extent of its completion (Cf. Rom. 8:19-21).

The grand finale of biblical images is found in the Revelation. In the Book of Revelation, all the biblical images are intertwined into a single narrative in which God's project of the creation and recreation is finalized. Scores of vivid images and songs are used to illustrate the wonder, power and presence of God. Final struggle against evil, ultimate victory of saints, the everlasting rule of God and the splendor of the Kingdom are expressed in an imaginative vision in the book. Therefore, Revelation in a sense had better be sung and danced rather than be analyzed or

explained in a flat, insipid tone, for it is only in such artistic celebration that the eternal beauty and glory of God are foretasted properly.

Thus, the Bible is rich in images. It does not consist of a string of words only. Images are engraved in and through the central themes of the Bible – from the beauty of original creation, through Moses' encounter on Sinai and the cloud and fire in the wilderness, to the splendor of the tabernacle (temple) and the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel on the Day of the Lord, and to the transfiguration, the crucifixion, Pentecost, and the return of Christ. A wealth of images plays a part to reveal who God is and what He has done. "If Christian religion is the most convincing, it is so precisely because it is also the most aesthetic. Its foundational insights are not derived by logic, nor simply accepted by blind faith, but can be directly, or "aesthetically" seen, both in Creation ... or in the Scriptures" (Bychkov 2008:xv). God relates to us not only in words but in images as well. In Hebrew thinking, word (*dabar*) is essentially understood as an event which includes an act visibly perceivable as God's speech always accomplishes the purposes for which it is sent, never returning to Him empty (Isa 55:11). The Word that became flesh and blood is as much non-verbal an event as verbal. The Word is visual image (Cilliers 2012a:106). Therefore, images are not out of the biblical tradition; rather, they are integrated into the revelation of God's purpose for the world as the Word is revealed holistically in both the verbal and the non-verbal.

#### **4.1.5. The upsurge of a culture of images**

There is another reason why we should consider art/aesthetics in our theological enterprise: Our society is saturated with images (Cilliers 2012a:84; Dyrness 2001:156; Kearney 1988:1; Wallace 1995:7). At present, it is almost a cliché to say that we are living in a culture in which images occupy a central place. Suppose a case of a person in our contemporaries. His name is 'ordinary': As soon as TV turns itself on automatically for alarm, the morning news inscribes the first image of the day onto his consciousness. On the way to his work a series of images – signboards of shops, advertisement screen on buildings, election posters, etc. – escort him to his office, standing in line of either side of the road. In workplaces, he continually

converses with icons, images, and video clips on his smartphone and computer. In the evening at home, he presses the play button of a DVD player and steep himself again in the image world – and then, probably swimming in the movie world even in his dream. Thus, we are living with images, images, images! They bombard us from morning till night. Today images are everywhere we turn our eyes.

Images are not just pervasive; they are also influential and powerful in the contemporary culture. They determine (or, manipulate, in a possible way) a large portion of our existential experience.<sup>48</sup> Kearney (1988:2) remarks:

The contemporary eye is no longer innocent. What we see is almost invariably informed by prefabricated images. ... now the image *precedes* the reality it is supposed to represent. Or to put it in another way, reality has become a pale reflection of the image.

Images influence us immensely. What is more, often the relation between image and reality is inversed in various areas of our society: In politics, politicians are elected because of the media image they project, which might differ from what they really are. In the media world, affairs are brought to us in filtered, sensationalized or exaggerated images to the extent that pseudo-events are being reported rather than the true story of the events. In the economic sphere, the advertising industry is marketing strategically planned images, so that they create consumers' needs (the reality) and persuade them to buy products. Indeed, "The tail of images waves the dog of reality" (Cilliers 2012a:90).

However, an irony in our visual culture is that human imagination or creativity is being threatened in spite of the flood of images (Kearney 1988:3). We seem to suffer from a thirst of imagination, even though we are surrounded by images. Images that we see mostly in our society today are ones of dominant consumerist ideology (De Bleeckere 2003:213). The space of our visual experience is filled with consumption icons of the advertising industry: The beach calls up images of glamorous women

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<sup>48</sup> Consider how much we are confronted with images deliberately designed to catch our eyes, to beguile and to entice us into get-more-and-spend-more ideology (Dawtry & Irvine 2002:vii).

holding tanning lotion; soccer stadium reminds us of sports stars quenching their burning thirst by drinking Powerade or Coca-cola; or, an intimate occasion of my kid's birthday becomes the background of a family enjoying Happy Meal at McDonald's. The advertising industry 'builds' certain images to monopolize people as much as possible. Our senses are catechized by images calculated and projected precisely in compliance with the consumerist mentality of the day. And our aesthetic discretion – beauty, goodness and truth – is blunted or confused by kitsch. As for this crisis of imagination and beauty in our time, Cilliers (2012a:87) remarks as follows:

Currently there exists – and in fact it always has – something like a *semblance of beauty, a mock beauty*, in which commercial strategy, monetary gain and the right “label” has the upper hand; a semblance of beauty which is nothing other than kitsch, a beautiful but dangerous lie, which tries to hide the reality of life, and is therefore useful for destructive ideologies ...

In the domain of art, Andy Warhol is the one who portrays the consumerist mentality and the commercialization of the postmodern society. Warhol rejects the idea of originality of an artwork in a unique time and space, which is the modern conviction. He rather proclaims the postmodern message that the image has now become a consumable commodity just like industrial products reproducible endlessly in large quantities. In order to display the artificiality, the pseudo-status of the image, Warhol has parodied the modern concept of authenticity of the image by way of reproduction and repetition (Kearney 1988:3). A typical example is his *Marilyn Monroe serigraph*.





Figure 19. Source: <http://likeabirdblog.com/2009/05/screen-printing/>

All in all, what remains with this kind of art, or what is announced by it is the epiphany of the commercialism, consumerist mentality. What it depicts is not a world with depth or originality, but a world full of reproductions and their consumption. Concepts like truth, objectivity and normativity is mocked in this art (Cf. Cilliers 2012a:89).

In contemporary culture where our consciousness is formed by images, what should our reaction – especially, we as Protestants – be? What must the church and theology do as we are living in this culture and society? Regarding this question, one sure thing is that the answer can be neither to shun the cultural waves of images nor to float around as they move. Undoubtedly, images that prevail in the culture are not always for good. Perverse side effects of the culture of images promote commercialism, consumerism, or reckless violence while sound values like communion, cooperation and communication are not encouraged. On the other hand, however, we witness also that not all of the image culture is evil. For instance, films such as *Matrix*, *Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* include religious consciousness – the struggle between good and evil, the ultimate victory of weak humanity over evil powers, and so on. Films as a new development of modern visual

culture definitely take part in people's quest for meaning. Not only are they a captivating medium that can convey the mystery of life and of religion (Hill 2002:14), but they also have a great potential to offer integrative, aesthetic vision and experiences of faith by touching us, shocking us, saddening us, humoring us, and electrifying us. Thus, Wall (2002:36) states: "film has the capacity to probe the stuffiness of existence and discover gifts of the holy and visits of grace in a variety of degrees of intensity, at times as a gentle rain and at other times as a raging storm of joy".

The culture of images is influential and ambiguous. The surge of the image culture is the stream we cannot swim against. For the Christian church, it may be a challenge and a chance at the same time. Though we may not have welcomed this turn toward the visual and the rise of new media and viewed them as threat to the religion of the Word, yet aesthetic imagination has the potential to become a key to unlock the heart of the contemporary generation that has a sense of visual literacy (Dyrness 2001:20). Therefore, exploring aesthetics is timely now. Christian ministers should be prepared to respond to a contemporary culture in which images are one of the primary means by which people think. The church and theology are tasked to make critical evaluations of idolatrous and destructive images that surround us and to offer essential, life-changing images of the gospel and challenge with them those who are lost in the haze of false, idolized images of contemporary kitsch.<sup>49</sup>

## Excursus

Based on the theological grounds that have been discussed thus far, it is contended that the visual should not be judged against the verbal. Surely it is true that the Protestant churches have been nourished uniquely by the word of preaching, and therefore, we tend to think that the verbal is the most important faculty. However, the gift of imagination, the role of visual art/aesthetics, and the integration of verbal and non-verbal are the ineradicable points to be rediscovered. Images are not just ornamental or supplemental to words. Rather, images open a new possibility of experience of words. In this regard, note what Cilliers (2012a:106 fn64) remarks:

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. 4.2.1 for further discussion about kitsch.

“Images ... bring dimensions of words to the fore that would otherwise have passed unnoticed. In a sense images *decelerate* the (fast, often unthinking) flow of words, for the purpose of *enriching and intensifying* them”. Images may enable the encounter with God at a deeper level that would be impossible with words alone.<sup>50</sup> Thus, both are to be seen as complementary.

## 4.2. Key concepts of theological aesthetics

Aesthetics is closely connected with theology as shown in the previous sections. Art and beauty form part of the Christian tradition, although they have been forgotten in certain periods of history. The aesthetic perception and the religious imagination have played a significant role in transmitting specific experiences and truth claims of faith with doxological, educational and liturgical aims. Aesthetics here is not an inferior servant of theology (*ancilla theologiae*) or mere illustrations of a given theological content. It constitutes a *locus theologicus*, another source for theology. Aesthetics broadens our theological rationality. It offers “an alternative and stimulating source that could enrich and deepen our understanding of the revelation of God” (Cilliers 2012a:59).

According to Van Erp (2004:50-57), the landscape of theological aesthetics as a separate discipline was formed in the twentieth century by three renowned theologians, i.e. Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950), Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988). Their distinct contributions to the development of theological aesthetics could be summarized as follows: ‘imagination’ as a consequence of being created in the image of God (Gerardus van der Leeuw), the work of art as the human expression of ultimate ‘meaning’ (Paul Tillich), and ‘beauty’ as form and analogy of the divine (Hans Urs von Balthasar). Here, three key concepts that the theologians emphasized respectively are beauty, imagination and

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<sup>50</sup> As regards the adhesive relation between the non-verbal and verbal, Lukken also asserts that presentative and discursive symbolisms should be in interplay with each other. Presentative symbolism is principally the non-verbal ones such as the visual, space, light, color, gesture, movement, mime, dance, decoration, clothing, objects, images, aroma, silence, and so on. In contrast to this, language is in essence discursive. He states that presentative symbolism plays a central intermediary role in human life just as discursive symbolism does. If we, disregarding presentative symbolism, lose the balance between both, it leads to the senselessness of the self (Lukken 2005:29-31).

meaning. In theological perspective, these agenda could be restated in the form of questions as the following: How does worldly beauty mirror divine beauty? What is the consequence of the biblical *imago Dei* for the independence and operation of human imagination? How does a work of art communicate a specific religious view on life, i.e. search for meaning? In the subsequent sections, responses to these questions will be sought after.

#### 4.2.1. Beauty

The concept of beauty is clearly battling for survival. In recent philosophical debates, beauty as an aesthetic category has played a minor role<sup>51</sup> and has sometimes been challenged as having little relevance in the face of the ugliness and the suffering of world wars, nuclear weapons, global terror, terminal diseases, hunger, poverty and human alienation. To many people, indeed, beauty is considered as a trivial concern or a luxury for the elite while it is contrasted to the other pressing issues of ethics or politics in our day (Thiessen 2005:207). Beauty is now generally viewed either in a haze of romanticism or in terms of kitschified commercialism of little substance.

Beauty is seen “the pretty, the merely decorative, or the inoffensively pleasant”, its intention being nothing more than merely evoking a sentimental feeling about pretty sunsets and artistic flower arrangements. Others interpret beauty exclusively in terms of corporeal and even hedonistic and narcissistic trends: beauty then becomes a slogan for ‘lifestyle’ advertisements and cosmetic make-overs. Beauty becomes nothing more than “a naked woman advertising perfume.” The classic connection between beauty, goodness, and truth, has been fully shattered (Cilliers 2011a:259-260).

The crisis of beauty today is in the fact that it is understood as disinterested, disconnected with goodness and truth. According to Farley (2001:1-12), beauty is

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<sup>51</sup> The downplaying of beauty in modern artistic sensibility has resulted from the subjectification of the concept of beauty. Since Kant began to judge beauty in terms of taste, beauty has been claimed to be a subject of pleasure or delight ‘apart from any interest’. Thereafter, beauty was merely understood as part of the definition of aesthetics, insofar as scholars still wanted to see beauty as a component of art itself. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, beauty became more marginalized and fragmented as new ways of artistic expression and new media – e.g. avant-garde, iron and glass – were sought (Cf. Stoker 2008:157).

often understood in a dichotomized perspective in which beauty is located versus other self-evident important virtues like morality, faith or political justice. He further attributes this discreditation of beauty to cultural elements of postmodern society as well as to religious heritage of some iconoclastic Christian traditions: Certain features of postmodern society (isolation from nature, technocratic and bureaucratic institutions, consumerism and cultural narcissism) tend to suppress beauty as an important value and an interpretive concept. Moreover, iconoclasm, asceticism and futurism of some Christian traditions also have disregarded the concept of beauty.

In one way or another, however, the classic idea of God as supreme Beauty and the triad of the beautiful, good and true have persisted, marginally though, from the very early stage of Christian history to this day. Classical thinkers such as Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas saw beauty, goodness and truth in the world as essential parts of God's revelation to us because God Himself is the ultimate Beauty, Goodness and Truth (Cf. Thiessen 2005:29, 33-37, 88-89). Von Balthasar as a major figure of theological aesthetics in the twentieth century also developed the idea of a perfect unity of the three transcendental attributes of God. He, introducing beauty as a separate and independent transcendental, confirmed that beauty, goodness and truth should be understood in their interwovenness and inseparableness (Cf. Stoker 2008:163; Van Erp 2004:101). Olivier (2007:7), in the same line with these thinkers, argues that art is the domain where truth and goodness are encountered, particularly by means of relating to the dehumanizing function of techno-science and capitalism. Therefore, in dealing with the matters of beauty, goodness and truth:

It is questionable whether we can ever know one except in intimate connection with the others. ... There is a truth – a reality, an authenticity – about beauty and goodness. There is goodness – a wholesomeness, salutariness, a sacredness – about both beauty and truth. There is beauty in truth – in its self-evidence, its simplicity, its transparency – and in goodness, especially in the comeliness of moral character (Avis 1999:78-79).

The beauty of God is revealed to us not only in Christ, who is the perfect revelation of God's beauty, goodness and truth, but also in the beautiful creation of God and art, from which something of God's beauty and inspiration can be sensed. In an

analogical perspective, the beauty in the world can be related to the divine beauty (though the two should not be identified, of course). Beauty is rooted in God. It is “all about the nature of God and God’s intention with creation, namely harmony and wholesomeness” (Cilliers 2012a:62).

Nevertheless, we do not necessarily experience reality as beautiful. As Cilliers (2012a:62-63) remarks:

the world and our existence on this planet are often anything but “beautiful”. Can a snow-capped mountain, pointing its peaks through white clouds, for instance, be “beautiful” – if the slaughtering of innocent women and children by marauding soldiers takes place at its foot? Were the colourful flowers on the Cambodian “killing fields” really “beautiful”? And what of the “beautiful” music brought forth from the Jewish inmates playing Bach on their violins in the concentration camps to help sooth Nazi officers?

Faced with such horrible realities, people may regard beauty as an illusion, or at worst, a lie. Yet we should not discard beauty because it is in the very context of ugliness that we look forward to an alternative reality of beauty in an eschatological anticipation. Beauty is not obliterated by the ugly; the ugly rather opens up a radically different perspective on the reality by contrasting the paradoxical tension between what we hope for and what we are experiencing now. Ugliness, in this sense, is not the antithesis of beauty<sup>52</sup>, because beauty does not exclude ugliness (disorder, chaos, disproportion or disorientation, whatever the name may be), but incorporates it in its dialectic process of quest for reestablished beauty (reestablished order, proportion or reorientation).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Eco (2004:149) notes that ugliness has been a part of understanding of beauty: Within the framework of the general order as a whole, the ugly contributes by way of contrast to making the light of beauty shine out all the more. From this standpoint, even the ugly things that strike us as unpleasant are seen as necessary and have a redeemed implication.

<sup>53</sup> Cilliers (2011a:262) explicates beauty by paradoxical tension: Beauty, understood in the tentative chasm between proportionate order and disproportionate chaos, reframes the existing reality and anticipates a new, fundamentally different type of reality. The quest for beauty is sparked off by this paradoxical tension. It is energized by the movement from disproportion to proportion, i.e. from chaos to order. The quest for beauty as a healing of our life emerges out of the experiences of suffering and threat, i.e. chaotic disproportionateness (Cf. also Cilliers 2012b:6).



In the light of theological aesthetics, this is particularly true of faith, because the Christian sense of beauty accommodates the ugliness of the cross (Cf. Stoker 2008:169-170). The beauty of God is revealed exactly in the paradox of the ugly beauty of the cross (Campbell & Cilliers 2012:6). The ugliness of the cross is *par excellence* the manifestation of the beautiful God: The cross is ugly in the sense that Jesus' death on the cross is the work of sinful humanity, opposing God's will; yet the cross is beautiful at the same time because it is indeed a part of God's plan of salvation. "The crucifixion as a judicial murder was ugly; as martyrdom it was beautiful. Physically it was ugly; morally – in its meaning of self-sacrifice for others – it was beautiful. What happened to Christ was ugly and horrid; his willingness to undergo it was beautiful" (Viladesau 2006:12; 2008:140).

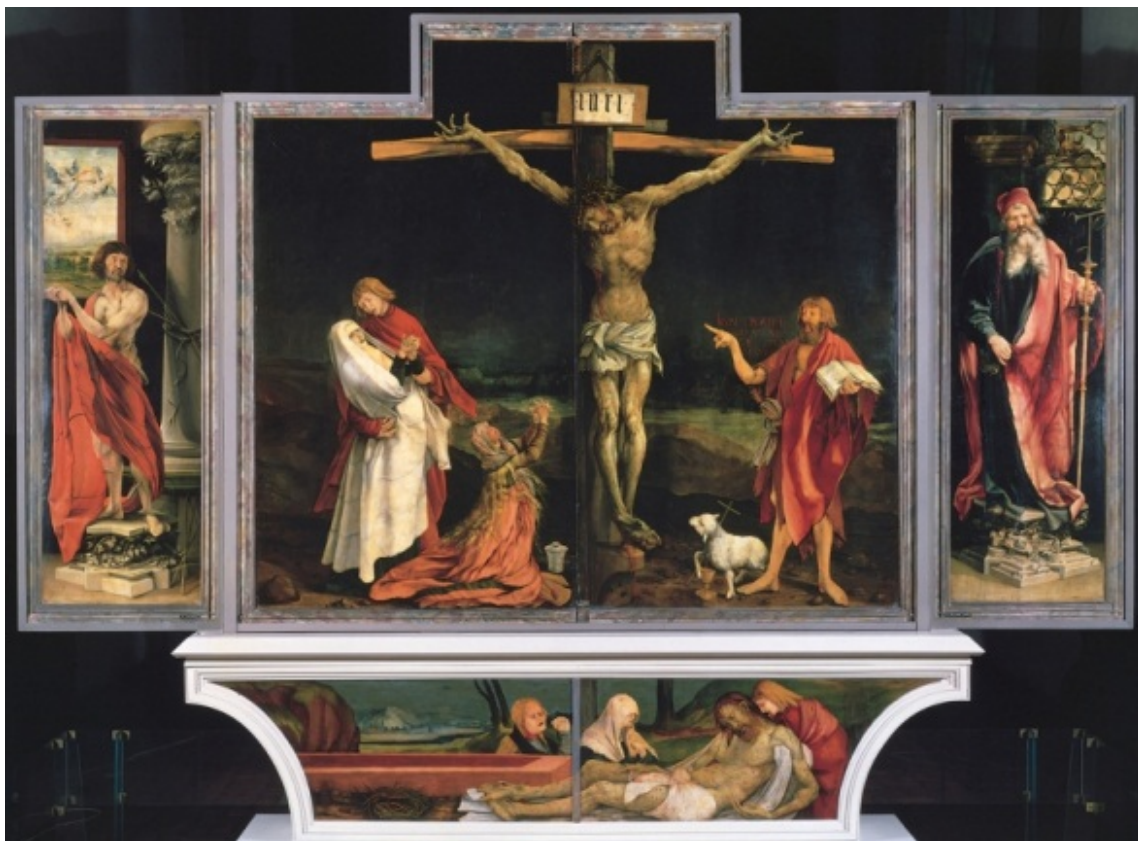


Figure 20. Source:

<http://schools.nashua.edu/myclass/lavallee/Art%20History%20Pictures/ch23/index23.html>

Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece is one of the greatest examples in this

regard. The painting was created in the late fifteenth century for the chapel of a hospital in Isenheim, Germany – a hospital that treated those suffering from Saint Anthony's fire (ergotism), a disease that they had contracted from eating spoiled wheat and that ended in a gruesome and inevitable death preceded by a horrible suffering from festered sores all over the body. The altarpiece shows a vivid presentation of suffering and grief. Christ's body hangs from the cross, physically distorted and twisted. His head sags on his chest, the crown of thorns piercing his forehead and causing blood to run over his face, which is caught in a moment of utter agony. The fingers of his hands are splayed as if in a last entreaty for release from pain. Sores cover his nearly nude body, sores probably similar to the ones borne by the patients of the hospital. To his left we see John the Baptist and the lamb of God; to his right we see his mother, Mary Magdalene, and the Beloved Disciple. Magdalene, her hair down in flowing disarray, is the image of distraught grief, while his mother, caught in a swoon by the Beloved Disciple, is a figure of despair and loss. The interaction of dark and light colors – red, white, green, and gold – make this composition starkly mystical as well as terribly disturbing (Jensen 2004:140). Huysmans (1958:25) gives a succinct account of the painting as follows:

That awful Christ who hung dying over the altar of the Isenheim hospital would seem to have been made in the image of the ergotics who prayed to him; they must surely have found consolation in the thought that this God they invoked had suffered the same torments as themselves, and had become flesh in a form as repulsive as their own; and they must have felt less forsaken, less contemptible. It is easy to see why Grünewald's name, unlike the names of Holbein, Cranach and Dürer, is not to be found in the account-books of the records of commissions left by emperors and princes. His pestiferous Christ would have offended the taste of the courts; he could only be understood by the sick, the unhappy and the monks, by the suffering members of Christ.

Clearly, the transcendent beauty of God embraces the abysmal darkness of the cross. But meanwhile, it does not mean that suffering of the cross was in itself beautiful.<sup>54</sup> The contrasting tension still remains. If we, overlooking or beautifying the

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<sup>54</sup> In Dostoyevsky's novel *The Idiot*, Ippolit describes the uncompromisable suffering of Jesus in a striking way in his commentary on a copy of Holbein's painting *Christ's body in the grave* (figure 21)

ugly moment of suffering, make a shortcut to the bright side only to fabricate triumphalistic theology of glory, then the truth of beauty drains off rapidly and beauty deteriorates into (theological) kitsch (Hereby the antithetical notion to beauty can be argued to be kitsch, not ugliness.).<sup>55</sup> Theological kitsch comes up exactly when the ugliness of the cross or the suffering of life is sanitized, sugarcoated and sentimentalized. Cilliers describes this process as kitschification or as plastification. He contends that what this plastification displays is not the beauty, goodness and truth of suffering life but a fake (or, simulation) of beauty, goodness and truth, that is superficial; inhuman; a life-under-cosmetics; plaster of Paris existence; the pretence of originality.<sup>56</sup> Kitschified theology (theology of glory) understands life as if there is no death, or at least, death is not so deadly. It veils death. It conceals the suffering of life. On the contrary, the ugly beauty of the cross accepts the deadliness of death

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that hangs in Rogozhin's house:

The picture depicted Christ, who has just been taken from the cross. I believe that painters are usually in the habit of depicting Christ, whether on the cross or taken from the cross, as still retaining a shade of extraordinary beauty on his face; that beauty they strive to preserve even in his moments of greatest agony. In Rogozhin's picture there was no trace of beauty. It was a faithful representation of the dead body of a man who has undergone unbearable torments before the crucifixion, been wounded, tortured, beaten by the guards, beaten by the people, when he carried the cross and fell under its weight, and, at last, has suffered the agony of crucifixion, ... It is true, it is the face of a man who has only *just* been taken from the cross ... there is still a look of suffering on the face of the dead man, as though he were still feeling it ... (Dostoyevsky 1958:446).

<sup>55</sup> It is not easy to define what comes within the purview of kitsch, because the discernment of it remains to be a subjective exercise. Nonetheless, in the art world it generally denotes artworks characterized by sentimental, often pretentious bad taste, or of mere vulgarity. It usually applies to cheap works produced for the mass market, such as those found in souvenir shops and chain stores. A work of art that falls into the category of kitsch, "in order to justify its function as a stimulator of effects, flaunts the outward appearance" (Eco 2007:404), but in fact is mediocre. Herein lies the essence of kitsch: It is a simulated fake that wears the mask of originality but in fact denies it (Cilliers 2012a:93-94).

<sup>56</sup> In terms of the unity of beauty, goodness and truth, Cilliers (2012a:96-99) reflects on the impact of kitsch on liturgy as follows:

Kitsch as simulated beauty changes God's beauty into sentimentality: "A kitschified cross no longer drips blood, but honey; no longer embodies pain, but plastic; no longer mediates salvation, but sentiment" (Cilliers 2012a:97). In kitschified liturgy, a radically secularized form of the gospel – theology of success – is promoted.

Kitsch as simulated goodness transforms God's goodness (grace) into moral domestication: "It overestimates humanity's potential for self-generated healing and therefore loses out on grace" (Cilliers 2012a:97). In kitschified liturgy, languages and rituals work as 'self-help' techniques. This simulation of goodness does not understand that human beings desperately need the grace of God.

Kitsch as simulated truth dampens truth, so it changes truth into dull generalization: "Kitsch cannot endure life's struggles. It avoids theodicy like the plague. ... it bypasses reality, also the reality of suffering, poverty and being truly human" (Cilliers 2012a:98). Liturgical kitsch glosses over the truths of life. Hence, it has no ethical or political sharpness.

fully. The beauty of the cross does not try to cover up the ugliness of suffering in life. It rather enables us to anticipate a healed, radically different reality in the light of the resurrection (Cilliers 2012a:92-96).



Figure 21. Source: <http://thelectern.blogspot.com/2010/06/idiot-dostoevsky.html>

#### 4.2.2. Imagination

The term 'imagination' literally means 'image-generation' or 'image-creation'. It is the human ability to conceive of something that is not actually present in the mind's eye. As people use this capacity in perceiving and naming things, and in all aspects of creativity, no knowledge is possible without it. By the same token, it is also a basic prerequisite for religion, for the knowledge of God. Religion characteristically employs the power of imagination in order to make accessible the ultimate transcendent reality (Berendsen 2008:139-140; Troeger 2007:60).

However, imagination has not received its due attention from theologians, at least not until recently. For many centuries, imagination has been either ignored or rejected, perhaps because of its seeming to connote fantasy, illusion, what is unreal, false, or irrational (Note that if we want to disparage the fears that another person has, we often say 'It's all in your imagination'. Moreover, see how 'imaginary' is often used in a pejorative meaning, suggesting self-deception.) (Sherry 1992:123-124; Troeger 2007:61-62; cf. La Shell 1987:309). The depreciation of the imagination may be traced back to Plato, who relegates it to the bottom of the epistemological order, to the most untrustworthy one. Augustine and Aquinas, the major figures of the ancient and medieval church, too, laid more stress on reason and intelligence over the physical and sensual attributes of imagination, standing in line with Platonism. These thinkers generally perceived imagination in mimetic terms – as an imitation or a copy of some truth, and therefore, as a subordinate, inferior quality (Thiessen

1999:262). In modern centuries, the dramatic progress of science endorsed positivism that produced the dualism of 'real' versus 'imaginative'. It simply identified reality or truth with scientific knowledge to the world of middle-sized empirical objects, while relegating all other truth claims about the nonempirical – the metaphysical as well as the artistic and the religious – to the realm of the merely imaginary (Cf. Berendsen 2010:217-218; Green 1989:83).

Contrary to the assumed disapprovals, however, imagination is crucial to the process of knowing. Imagination is "the hidden condition of all knowledge" (Kearney 1988:167). It is employed in various kinds of human activities such as religious belief and practice, the scientific investigation of nature, and artistic endeavors.<sup>57</sup> Imagination or imaginative thinking is in complementary relation with abstract conceptual thought. As Green (1989:70) states, "The clearest way to represent the relation of image to concept ... is not as a dichotomy but [as] a spectrum, extending from the pregnant image, full of implicit or potential application, to the developed concept, in which the underlying analogy has been articulated and delimited". Most human thinking takes place in various combinations and complex interactions between the extremes of the spectrum. In a sensible imagination, a degree of abstraction is present already, which directs and constitutes our perception; and conversely, an explanatory theory – even of the most abstract kind – arises out of imagination and has the connection with the world of experience which is mediated through imagination's paradigmatic and analogical functioning (Viladesau 1999:88).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Recent developments in philosophy of science suggest that imagination is an immediate source of recognizing scientific truth. Scientists now acknowledge that imagination plays a fundamental role in the origin, development, and ongoing work of the natural sciences. The critical importance of imagination in scientific knowledge is explained with the concept of 'paradigm', which Thomas Kuhn introduced. A paradigm is the framework within which data can be interpreted. Without the framework, the accumulated data has no meaning. A scientist must use imagination to situate the collected data within a paradigm. In order to speculate, a scientist needs to use imagination (Berendsen 2008:142-143; Green 1989:45-46).

Further, based on the advances of contemporary science, now it is recognized that there are 'realities' – subatomic particles, for example – that cannot be seen or pictured. Our idea of reality and truth is expanded beyond the limitations imposed by positivistic modern sciences and the corresponding illusion that anything requiring imagination must be imaginary. Green (1989:77) states: "As soon as one probes beyond the middle-sized world of familiar objects, whether in natural science, in poetry, or in theology, imagination becomes increasingly indispensable".

<sup>58</sup> This complementarity between abstract concept and imagination shed some light on the integration between words and images. Words and images function in a manner of overlapping rather than a total disjunction. Words can form pictures in our mind; and, on the other hand, pictures, gestures, and



Imagination functions in the process of thinking in three distinguishable ways (Viladesau 1999:83-86): Firstly, imagination functions in the generative process of all thinking. Even the most abstract thought does not exclude images. Neurology seems to confirm this. Viladesau (1999:84) quotes neurologist Antonio Damasio's observation: "Most of the words we use in our inner speech, before speaking or writing a sentence, exist as auditory or visual images in our consciousness. If they did not become images, however fleetingly, they would not be anything we could know".

Secondly, imagination functions as a way of discovery and construction of analogies, metaphors, and paradigms. In this sense, Green (1989:66) calls imagination "the paradigmatic faculty, the ability of human beings to recognize in accessible exemplars the constitutive organizing patterns of other, less accessible and more complex objects of cognition". The use of models and paradigms becomes increasingly important, because contemporary scientific research goes beyond the scope perceptible with the physical eye. Consider, for example, the imaginative models of 'particle' and 'wave' used to generate insights about the imperceptible world in our eye.

Thirdly, imagination is crucial also to our search for meaning and the knowledge of the world. People imagine the world in which they live, the things they see, the culture they co-design and the religious tradition in which they live. Religion, philosophy, art, music and literature are all embodied forms of the search for meaning; and imagination pervades them. Art, as a quest for meaning, reproduces the experiences of life in intensified forms of action, symbol, gesture and text. It invites us to a perception of truth perceived in the affective/intellectual mode. Thus, it is clear that human beings cannot function without using their imagination.

Imagination as an inherent faculty of human beings is analogous to God the Creator in the respect that the humanity is created in the *imago Dei*.<sup>59</sup> Many contemporary

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other sensible images can serve as a 'language' to symbolize abstract ideas and meanings.

<sup>59</sup> Etymological meaning of the 'imagination' is also analogical. It generally connotes the experience



theologians argue for this: First of all, Van der Leeuw asserted that being created after the image of God entails an analogy between God and human, which is a similarity within an even greater dissimilarity. On the basis of the concept of the image of God, human imagination is claimed to be like the creative force of God. An act of artistic creation generates a concrete work of art just as God fashioned humanity as the concrete image of God. Thus, the concrete image of God is the subject of the relation between God and human beings. Van der Leeuw picked up this concept of human being as the image of God from Barth; but he split from Barth at a critical point of the analogy. Whereas Barth emphasizes the difference of Creator and creation as a radical separation (Although human beings are the images of God, they cannot avail themselves of this image character.), Van der Leeuw asserts the creative force in human imagination to be a faithful response to the divine revelation in analogical terms (Van der Leeuw 1963:308ff; cf. Van Erp 2004:51-52).

Green (1989:84ff) also points out that human beings are most God-like in their ability to imagine. According to him, the *imago Dei* as the point of similarity between God and human, made God accessible to human imagination. God made Himself known to us, appealing to our imagination. However, the imagination, like all human abilities, was depraved by sin. Thereafter, the sinful imagination has become far from being a source for the true knowledge of God, but rather worked as a destructive source for human hostility toward God, viz. idolatry. In this sense, therefore, salvation must be something that can emancipate the imagination from its captivity to false images. The image of God disfigured by sin is to be restored and renewed in Christ.

Troegeer also calls attention to the inherency of imagination in image-bearers of God, and at the same time, the consequences of human fallenness to the imagination and its redeemed practice. He declares that being created in the image of God implies that we are created to create, and also that being faithful to God requires the engagement with our imagination. He draws the theses from his exposition of the creation narrative in Genesis 1:

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of seeing one thing as a picture of another (Green 1989:92-93).

The first image of God that appears in the Bible is no image at all: “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2). There is no picture of what God looks like in these verses. There is, however, a vivid portrayal of what God does: God creates. God sends a wind over the waters, and then names creation into existence.

This imageless image of God as creator is the only image of God that has yet appeared in the Bible when we read twenty-four verses later: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness’” (Genesis 1:26a). As the biblical witness continues to unfold, God will be revealed through scores of other images: redeemer, shepherd, fortress, liberator, etc. But at this point, in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, the first image of God we have encountered is the imageless image of God the creator. Therefore, to be made in the image of God is to be created to create (Troeger 2007:65).

Imagination is unmistakably part of the definition of the image of God. Imagination may be attributed to God, because the imagination of God is expressed and manifested in the creation as God’s imaginative handiwork, the incarnation as God’s imaginative way of making his love real, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as God’s continuous imaginative activity (Cf. Brown 2004:321; McIntyre 1987:49-64; Sherry 1992:122). In response to the imaginative works of God, we honor Him, the source of our imaginative capacity when we create works of art, music and literature as well as science. These are in harmony with the One who has made all that exist; we honor God when we execute the holy purposes of justice, compassion, peace and reconciliation through the faithful use of imagination. Undeniably, though, there are many instances that human beings misuse their imagination and creativity. Besides systems of injustice and oppression, weapons, and instruments of torture, there can be a long list of bloody things human beings have created. With these, they not only dishonor God but also distort and disfigure the image of God in themselves. Yet, nevertheless, the possibility of the abuse of imagination does not invalidate the God-given gift of imagination. If we cast off using the imagination itself because of its potential abuse, then we would have to decline all other gifts as well because any gift from God is exposed to the possibility of abuse (Troeger 2007:65-66). Therefore, what is needed indeed is the ‘redeemed imagination’ rather than total

renouncement of it.<sup>60</sup>

Imagination gives vitality to our faith and theology. We perceive and experience our reality anew in an eschatological hope by imagining the alternative Kingdom of God. We are awakened to an ethical vision by putting ourselves in others' place in imagination and having a sympathetic understanding of them. Moreover, we get encouraged in a worship service by recalling the common memories and stories of God's gracious love in our imagination (Cf. Berendsen 2008:148-149). Therefore,

Imagination is a necessary component of all profound knowing and celebration; all remembering, realizing, and anticipating; all faith, hope, and love. When imagination fails doctrines become ossified, witness and proclamation wooden, doxologies and litanies empty, consolations hollow, and ethics legalistic. It is at the level of the imagination that any full engagement with life takes place (Wilder 1976:2).

### 4.2.3. Meaning

Humanity "is a species that lives, and can only live, in terms of meaning it must construct in a world devoid of intrinsic meaning but subject to physical law" (Rappaport 1999:1). This search for meaning is what differentiates human beings from other living species. In the arts, people seek a kind of experience in which they can discover meaning and purpose for their lives. They try to be connected with the depths of life and spirituality by means of the arts. In the contemporary culture especially, the arts, indeed, seem to be competing with the church in providing an integrative vision of life (Note that museums, concert halls, theatres, and cinemas have become a sort of 'shrines' for many modern people.). In this context, the arts and religion, artistic experiences and religious experiences are increasingly overlapping – "religion is being aestheticised, while art is becoming spiritualized" (Zock 2008:ix).

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<sup>60</sup> In his autobiography, C. S. Lewis (2002:207-209) speaks of the 'baptized imagination'. He states that his own imagination was indeed baptized into faith before any other part of him was. He insists that our imagination plays a greater role in our faith than we often acknowledge, and therefore, it is our sense of beauty that needs to be converted as much as our moral or intellectual lives. The baptized imagination is a kind of holiness which discovers the presence of the Kingdom pervading this imaginative world (Cf. Currie 2000:14).

Tillich mentioned religion and art as two of the three ways in which humanity pursues the ultimate reality (The other is philosophy.) (Tillich 1960:1). For him, religion is understood as the state of concern about something ultimate. In other words, religion, being concerned particularly with the ultimate questions such as the meaning of one's existence, one's finitude, one's existential estrangement, is to provide the symbols which give answers to the basic questions of life. Similarly, Tillich views art as an expression of the depths of life and the question of meaning of human existence which arises out of existential crisis, and thus, it makes the ultimate reality transparent.<sup>61</sup> Although Tillich's theology of art is not without critiques,<sup>62</sup> the

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<sup>61</sup> Viewing the relationship between religion and art in correlative terms, Tillich proposes four types of art:

Firstly, art with a non-religious style and a non-religious content. An example of this category would be a landscape by Rubens. Works in this category deal with ultimate concerns only peripherally and indirectly.

Secondly, art with a religious style and a non-religious content. It is art depicting the existential needs of people because it breaks through the superficial surface of things to reach the true depths of reality. A work best expressive of this category is Picasso's *Guernica*. Tillich regarded the work as the greatest Protestant picture since 1900.

Thirdly, art with a non-religious style and a religious content. The traditional religious artworks of the Renaissance are placed in this type (for example Raphael's *Madonna and Child*). Here, explicitly religious symbols are dealt with in a sentimental and superficial manner. Consequently, works of this sort can be dangerously irreligious because they do not necessarily feature deeper theological and existential issues.

Fourthly, art with a religious style and religious content. Tillich here refers to works by El Greco, Rouault and Grünewald, which are not only explicitly religious in subject matter, but also deal with profound life questions, breaking through the sentimental surface. This category represents good and explicit Christian art.

By religious 'style', Tillich means religious content or meaning that puts the ultimate question caused by human existential crisis. By religious 'content', Tillich means the subject matter that deals with explicit religious symbols or images (e.g. the cross, the nativity scene, etc.). Tillich opines that it is the second category (what he terms the existentialist level) that is best suited to communicate religious source because human estrangement as well as the longing for reunion are manifested in it. This existentialist level of art is best represented in the twentieth century by expressionism and its evolutions – cubism, surrealism, futurism, fauvism, and abstract expressionism. All of these, in varying degrees, are seen by Tillich as the most successful examples of religious art (Reiersen 1988:8-10; Tillich 1960:9, 11).

<sup>62</sup> According to Thiessen (1999:25), some critiques for Tillich can be such as follows:

1. One cannot make one artistic style (expressionism in Tillich's case) normative for all religious art.
2. Tillich's theory of the religious meaning in art would exclude from the start many important artists and works with religious subject matter in the history of art.
3. He assumes that modern artists deliberately set out with an 'objective intention' to portray the ground of being itself through distortion of natural form. However, this is too simplistic. Many of them are interested in little more than the matter of a purely formal nature.
4. The interpretation of art demands consistent adherence to and in-depth engagement with the work of art, but Tillich is lacking in interpreting works of art in detail.
5. The style is only part – not the whole – of the message.

momentous contribution he has made to the field of theological aesthetics remains unquestioned. Among the leading theologians of the twentieth century, he stands out as the one who brought autonomous modern art in the theological arena for the first time. Not only did he see the theological relevance especially in modern art, but moreover he found a point of contact between religion and art by claiming art (even art that contains little or no religious iconography explicitly) as a manifestation of ultimate concern derived from the human estrangement and predicament (Thiessen 1999:25).

People in the contemporary society know what the restlessness of the heart is. They know what the existential doubt and temptation really are. In those experiences of existential crisis, they are looking for meaning, orientation, hope and answers which can lead them beyond the cold conditions of life in the world. In this respect, two important areas of human life – religion and art – provide a way to overcome the crisis and superficiality of life by exploring its profound depths (Cf. De Gruchy 2001:239; Sherry 1992:4). People dig out the meaning and the purpose of their life in the teachings, worship and rituals of the church. They, moreover, find expressions of their deepest questions of life in art (Cf. Gräb 2001:42; Louw 2001:335).

#### **4.2.4. An integration of three concepts: Cilliers' model for practical theological aesthetics<sup>63</sup>**

According to Cilliers, practical theology is the study of God's praxis among us, the study of God's presence revealed in certain embodied encounters. Practical theology studies the ways in which people try to make sense of these embodied encounters, and one of the ways of deciphering the encounters is through aesthetics because God's presence among us is often revealed as His beauty.

We need imaginative interpretation in order to find meaning in an encounter with His beauty. Therein, Cilliers (2012a:66) proposes practical theological aesthetics as "*the imaginative deciphering of meaning in beauty*". In the proposition, he integrates three

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6. Tillich's use of the terms – style, content, expressionism – is somewhat confusing and unclear.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Cilliers 2012a:66-67; 2009c:44-45 for this section.

important concepts of theological aesthetics aforementioned – beauty, imagination and meaning – in a holistic way of deciphering. It is diagrammed as follows:

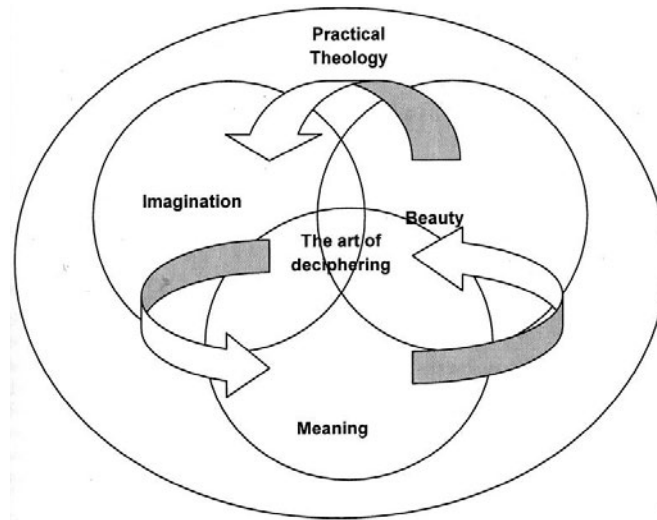


Figure 22. Source: Cilliers 2012a:66

The three concepts in the model do not work in discrete or chronological manner. They, rather, interact and enrich one another in a reciprocal dynamics. Cilliers (2012a:67) explains:

We need imagination to decipher beauty to find meaning, but finding meaning may lead back to a re-evaluation of beauty, which in turn will ignite imagination. We could therefore talk about the imagination of beautiful meaning, or the meaning of imagined beauty, or the beauty of meaningful imagination, etc. I prefer to call this *the beauty of imagined meaning*. Whichever way we choose to describe this reciprocal movement, at the centre we find the art of deciphering, which undergirds an aesthetical practical theology.

### 4.3. Five features of aesthetic expressions and their liturgical implications

#### 4.3.1. Revelatory

Traditionally, in the Protestant churches – the Reformed in particular – art has been suspected of having less commitment to revelation of God. The truths that art and



images embody in sensible forms often have been deemed lower than those that are purely linguistic and intellectual. The Protestants might somewhat appreciate sensible beauty and artistic products because these move the heart and will toward God. They might admit that the Scripture itself uses figures and poetry to communicate with us. Furthermore, they might also state that God condescended to take on flesh, and thereby, claim that pure spirit is not all that God requests in dealing with the material world and humanity endowed with the body, emotion, and imagination. Even so, however, a religious truth which is expressed beautifully, figuratively, and artistically has long had the reputation of being a less precise expression than what is said in systematic, conceptual discourse. Therefore, the plain and literal sense of the Scripture is normally what has been sought out when the truth claim has been at issue. As for the church's ongoing work of mediating God's truth, the inquirer has attended not to its art and poetry or even to its liturgy (though these are acknowledged to have their own unique value) but rather to doctrinal statements and sermons (Brown 1989:39-40).

Yet, the theology of art pursued in this research suggests a quite different understanding of this matter, that is, the truth of God may be disclosed through media with rich aesthetic qualities. Art has a dimension that brings us into an encounter with the divine. It reveals something beyond our experience and unites us to that revelation (García-Rivera 2008:171). Aesthetics has a theological calling because aesthetic forms become an ingredient in revelation of God. Revelation has characteristically taken on significant forms of aesthetics as it is shown through the Scripture.<sup>64</sup> Images, as Dyrness (1985:429) observes, are very much "integrated into the progressive revelation of God's purposes for the earth and pressed into service as the visible dimension of transcendent reality". In foundational biblical texts:

revelation of the divine is recorded and made transparent through narrative, poetry, doxology, etc. from and through the subjective religious experience of the writers and/or of those of whom they write. God's self-communication therefore happens through and is dependent on stories and images. Similarly the modern work of art – also through symbol and imagery – can be an

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. 4.1.4 again for the discussion about the aesthetic nature of the Bible.

expression and interpretation of the artist's religious experience and faith in paint on canvas (Thiessen 2001:219-220).

Revelation is not exclusively about the supernatural. The 'natural' and 'supernatural' revelation of God cannot be separated in a sharp dichotomy because the self-disclosure from God's side and the experience from the human side are indivisible in a revelatory event (Cf. Brown 1986:229 fn8; Koch 2004:391). God is often revealed in our everyday experiences. We might notice how breathtaking His sense of beauty is in viewing the spectacular scene of wild flowers in the West Coast National Park. We might realize what a magnificent Creator He is while we, sitting on Table Mountain, view the glowing vermilion orb of the sun slowly peeking above the ripples of the Atlantic. Or, even in a bitter moment of life, we could discover how sympathetic and understanding to our distress He is as we find in art a presentation of the fundamental pattern of our existence, i.e. joy mixed with tragedy. As O'Meara (1998:215-216) writes:

The scriptural theme of life out of death is also an artistic truth. ... Every human life, not just Jesus Christ's, like every artwork, has the quality of chiaroscuro: the beautiful is glimpsed with the sharp lines of finitude, the limits of negation, and the shadows of apophysis. ... human finitude and change are not hopeless and punishing shipwrecks but clearings for revelation. Even nothingness ... has its own dignity, reality, and dark glory.

God is not only transcendent but also immanent. "When God is far away (transcendent) God is not less near to us (immanent). God is ... *concurrently* different *and* nearby. Jesus is radically free ... to be the Other to us *and simultaneously* closer to us than the clothes we wear" (Cilliers 2012a:24). If God is totally other, then there could be no point of analogous resemblance with creation, and accordingly, no possibilities of revelation and knowledge of God (Cf. Gelpi 2001:358-359). However, as the infinite God has in fact chosen to reveal and communicate Himself in the finite experience of the human and the natural order, the possibility of revelation and the religious experience in art can be claimed.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Based on the understanding of God not as purely transcendent and of creation as bearing traces of God, theologians have maintained aesthetic analogy, a sacramental view of the created order. From

Viewing an artwork can be a revelatory moment of encountering God. Tillich's experience exemplifies this. At the end of the First World War, Tillich got a chance to see *Madonna and Child with Singing Angels* (1477) by Sandro Botticelli in Berlin. It was a unique moment of ecstatic revelation to him, which affected his whole life. He wrote:

Gazing up at it, I felt a state approaching ecstasy ... something of the divine source of all things came through to me. I turned away shaken. That moment has affected my whole life, given me the keys for the interpretation of human existence, brought vital joy and spiritual truth. I compare it with what is usually called revelation in the language of religion. I know that no artistic experience can match the moments in which prophets were grasped in the power of the Divine Presence, but I believe that there is an analogy between revelation and what I felt. In both cases, the experience goes beyond the way we encounter reality in our daily lives. It opens up depths experienced in no other way (Tillich 1989b:235).

Through the prophetic, mystical and aesthetic dimensions, the work of art can mediate the revelation of divine truths and ultimate meaning. In its concrete speaking to and through the senses, God could be encountered, and thereupon, a reframing of our lives may result. Art can confront people afresh with a question of God, question of our values and meaning (Cf. Nichols 1980:114). Just as the worship places us in touch with the life of God and reshapes the meaning of our life in its light, art also can help us to look differently. It may help us to see God who is present and absent at the same time. Art may be helpful to encourage people to see that there is a larger, permanent reality of God for which this world is determined (Brown 1986:231).

#### **4.3.2. Holistic**

Human beings exist, learn and think with the body as well as with the intellect. Psychologists confirm that the body is what a baby learns first in his or her conscious engagement with the external world. The very root of our rational engagement with

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this perspective, not only the use of art in religion is asserted, but ecological or environmental approach can be affirmed as well.

the world (and with God also) is found in our embodiment.

Christian worship is a deeply corporeal activity. The body and its senses are necessarily involved in worship. The biblical languages concerning worship prove this. Simply consider how vital, active and richly sensual the descriptions of worship in the Psalms and other Scriptures are – bowing down, kneeling, lifting of hands, clapping hands, dancing, singing, making procession, sharing of bread and wine, feasting, fasting and so on. All of these are associated with the worship of the church. In addition, if we look more closely, we find that even the generic terms for worship are undeniably corporeal. One of the most general expressions for the act of worship in the Old Testament is the verb *hishtachawah* which means ‘bow down’ or ‘prostrate’ (Preuss 1980:249). In the New Testament, the verb *proskyneo* is the most common word translated into ‘worship’ and its meaning is to ‘bow down’ or ‘casting oneself to the ground’ (Danker 2000:882). Both words denote the physical act of prostration, and in an extension of it, convey the ideas of worship and devotion. From the evidences, therefore, the embodied character of worship is implied. Even though our worship services might not feature all of the activities mentioned in the Scriptures, most Christian worship includes singing and playing of instruments, standing and sitting at fixed times, and the sharing of bread and wine.<sup>66</sup> Besides, the idea of worship or the inward attitude of worship is also conveyed in terms of embodiment – for instance, lifting up our hearts, turning your eyes upon Jesus or laying our lives before the Lord (Guthrie 2007:95-99).

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<sup>66</sup> Even the occasion of Quaker’s worship, in which they wait on the Lord in motionless silence, can be said to assume the bodily mode necessarily. The motionless silence is an activity in which one may be very keenly aware of the body because one undertakes the deliberate discipline of bodily stillness.

In spite of the critical importance of the body, however, this is not to claim that bodily actions and performances themselves constitute worship. In God’s rejection of Israel’s worship, He addressed that although the Israelites were certainly performing the acts of worship, their hearts were far from God (Cf. Amos 5:21-23). However, when we see the reasons why this condemnation is given, it is noted that the criticality of the body is still affirmed. Guthrie (2007:99 fn32) states:

“The prophecy does not fault the people for lacking the proper ‘inward attitude’. The problem is that their *actions of worship* stand in such contrast and radical opposition to *all their other actions*: ‘you trample on the poor and force him to give you grain’ (5:11); ‘you oppress the righteous and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts’ (5:12), and so on. It is in other words, an embodied and enacted hypocrisy. The remedy and way of repentance is also expressed in active and outward terms: ‘Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream’ (5:24). At no point does the prophet urge the people to abandon their outward worship in favour of a silent and inward disposition.”

Although worship thus has an embodied characteristic inherently, our worship culture might have lost sight of the importance of the body and the senses. In the Reformed liturgical tradition especially, the body and its senses have not occupied much attention. It has rather focused on the intellectual function and the auditory sense of preaching exclusively.<sup>67</sup> Wepener (2006:387) observes:

[In the Reformed church] the spoken and written word is still afforded priority over the word as communicated through the other four senses of the body. ... The Reformatory saying *Praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei* is still mainly and exclusively interpreted as the preaching being an auditory medium, and something like *See/ Smell/ Feel/ Taste verbi Dei est (also) verbum Dei*, is largely downplayed.

A truth is not a neatly defined rational concept. It is rather a holistic experience given to and through multi-dimensions, multi-senses of human nature. We can recognize it through the holistic integration of symbol and language, the mind and the body. The truth is most meaningfully discerned through the activity and receptivity of one's whole being. From an aesthetic perspective, therefore, the Christian truths we transmit need to have aesthetic patterns because the truths which are markedly aesthetic seem best able to affect us in the totality of our being. Art first makes an intense contact with the outer aesthetic fibers of our awareness (the bodily, sensuous knowledge). Then, it sends vibrations through to inner fibers where the embodied knowledge through the senses connects with a deeper reality which we call truth or meaning (Brown 1989:94, 102).

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<sup>67</sup> As mentioned previously, the discursiveness and the indifference (or discredit) to the body and the bodily (and aesthetic) experiences mediated through the senses are the marks of the Korean Presbyterian worship services which have been inherited from the Puritan tradition. In terms of aesthetics, the Puritanism characterizes strict wariness of fleshly experiences (e.g. emotion and enjoyment) and suspicion of all that stimulates the senses (e.g. imagination and images) (McGann 2002:17). Puritans generally view the human nature not in integrative or holistic perspective, but in distinction between the rational and sensitive aspects. According to La Shell (1987:306), "Though there are differences of opinion, most [puritans] hold that man's sensitive soul (which includes the faculties of common sense, imagination, and memory) has a kinship with the animals. His intellectual soul is made in the image of God and includes such faculties as reason, will, and conscience". The significance of rationality cannot be thought lightly, of course, since a particular logical interpretation of life based upon certain evidence is structured in the life of faith. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the life of faith is wholly intelligible; nor does it mean that reason is divorced from embodiment. On the contrary, human life has a holistic characteristic derived from both the body and mind which are mutually informing and reflecting in a non-dualistic manner.

Aesthetic media have significant implications for liturgical practices. They can enhance the identification of Christian truths and develop passing on of faith to much richer stages than when these are done by means of preaching only. Worship biased in one aspect of human constitution (e.g. worship biased towards the sermon and intellect) cannot appreciate the substance of life and the complexities of the world fully. The rational part of worship must exist in complementary and dialectic relation with the bodily, aesthetic aspect. Reasoned belief and bodily practice – these two aspects are inseparable, and their synthesis is most fully expressed and achieved in liturgical symbolism. Listen to the following remarks of Dyrness (2001:22-23):

The experience of worship – prayer, praise, and participation in the sacraments – provides for believers the opportunity of responding to the gracious presence of God with the whole of their beings. It is an embodied experience, involving standing, kneeling, or lifting of hands; it is a deeply emotional and intellectual response of the heart to God's offer of grace in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is also an experience of the will as the believer gives up his or her life in service to God, by physically taking the bread and wine that is offered, or by going under the waters of baptism. Even such a brief description calls attention to the oral, visual, even kinesthetic dimensions of these experiences. These dimensions call for embodiment and performance that throughout Christian history have given birth to art – to singing, dancing, altarpieces, and, during the Middle Ages, to dramatic presentations.

Worship requires us to be attentive to our bodily senses. In liturgy we never leave our senses behind. Rather, we have an experience of synesthesia in it – wherein the ear sees, the eye hears, the nose smells color, the tongue tastes fragrance through the proclamation of preaching as well as the enactment of the Sacrament. All the senses engage in those experiences (Cf. Pickstock 2010:727-728).

The aesthetic touches one wholly. It nourishes our entire person – the body, the senses, imagination as well as the intellect. It prompts us to new thoughts. It guides us into deeper phases of faith and truth because it contains a surplus that reason can never fully describe. Simply consider that God comes as close to us when bread and wine entering our bodies in the Eucharistic meal. It is a mystery that our whole



being understands but the reason alone can never explicate fully.

### 4.3.3. Participatory

Worship itself is a performative work of art as it re-presents God's salvific drama. In worship, we re-tell and re-enact the drama of Christ's life – his death, resurrection and his coming again. Private stories of people are connected to Christ's drama in worship. Their stories are interpreted in the light of the story of Christ so that their stories may be viewed with a new meaning (Cf. Webber 1992:34-39). Worship is basically a meeting between God and his people. In its dramatic dimension, people are engaged necessarily and their immediate participation is demanded as they come together before God and respond to His great glory; as they hear Him speak and respond to what He says; as they become the recipients of His saving deed through the symbols of bread and wine, and respond; as they hear Him send them forth and their response continues in the world (Webber 1992:132).<sup>68</sup>

The Korean Presbyterian churches, however, seems to fail in engaging the congregation in worship. In the sermon-dominant form of worship congregants

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<sup>68</sup> According to Cilliers (2012a:76), our bodies have much implication at this point. Because there is nothing more immediate than our bodies, the bodily presence is so critical for the participation in worship. In terms of this embodiment, cyber church (or, any electronized form of worship devoid of the bodily presence) may be critiqued as discordant with the notion of worshipping community. To construct such a form of worship would be an abstraction from life or a kind of liturgical spiritualization and individualism. Particularly here, Bonhoeffer's definition of the church – *Christus als Gemeinde existierend* (Christ existing as church-community; 1998:121) – is worth being attended to. He states:

The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer. With great yearning the imprisoned apostle Paul calls his "beloved son in the faith," Timothy, to come to him in prison in the last days of his life. ... A human being is created as a body; the Son of God appeared on earth in the body for our sake and was raised in the body. In the sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected community of God's spiritual-physical creatures. Therefore, the believer praises the Creator, the Reconciler and the Redeemer, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the bodily presence of the other Christian. The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian living in the diaspora recognizes in the nearness of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God (Bonhoeffer 1996:29).

In terms of the social meaning of embodiment, a corporeal expression of the African notion of togetherness, i.e. *Ubuntu* also gives much insight to Christian worship. *Ubuntu* is derived from the Zulu and Sotho versions of a traditional African aphorism. It means that one is a human being through others – in other words, I am because you are. The term *Ubuntu* defines an individual in terms of reciprocal relations. It characterizes the communal mind of black Africans that is instilled in their worship. (Cilliers 2009b:57).

merely watch and observe. They become spectators, not participants. They are conditioned to passivity, to being uninvolved. They are just entertained by someone else's (preacher's or worship leader's) performance. This audience mentality is truly the greatest obstacle to the participation of all God's people in worship.

A remedy for the performer/audience mindset can be found in the utilization of art, imagery and symbolism in worship. Consider the example of a replica of the Black Christ of Esquípulí, Guatemala, at its home in the San Fernando Cathedral of San Antonio, Texas (figure 23). The Esquípulí crucifix shows the engagement of people with the drama of Christ through a religious artwork. It indicates that (stories of) people are united to the larger story of the divine. García-Rivera (2008:173) terms this engaging quality of the aesthetic "a unitive, revelatory experience". Listen to his explanation:

Each candle represents the story of someone who has knelt before it and felt the "Big Story" that the sense of Beauty gives us a glimpse into the Eternal. At the feet of the crucifix, people have placed photos, payers, requests, in short, their "little stories." These are stories of their lives and their sorrows as they travel in the garden of Good and Evil. These "little stories" become a dramatics under the sense of Beauty. The sense of Beauty offers a horizon, a "Big Story," that provides a glimpse of a theo-drama, a drama in which our "little stories" can be seen in that strange aesthetics that is peculiar to drama (García-Rivera 2008:177).



Figure 23. Source: García-Rivera 2008:176

Given that a work of art is an event that presents the truth of our world and of ourselves, the spectator is essentially involved in it. In a work of art, the truth of our own world, the truth of the religious and moral world in which we live is laid bare before us. In the experience of art we are caught up in an event of truth in such a way that we belong to it (Gadamer 2006:124). We find ourselves claimed by the work and responsible to what it says. Art thus attests that the participatory feature is a basic phenomenon of aesthetic experience. Tate (2008:48-50) elucidates the participatory nature of art in three respects: Firstly, the spectator is involved in an artwork's being because it has the mode of being of an event. All arts are based on their enactment or their performance. The performance is particularly the most evident quality of the performing arts such as a drama or a play, because the artworks are truly there only in and through their performance. However, other forms of art such as painting and music are also intended 'to perform', 'to do something' to the one who sees or listens to them. Therefore, all arts are a meaningful structure that is intended for an

audience on whom they achieve their genuine impact. In an aesthetic experience, the spectator is no mere observer of what occurs, but a genuine participant, the one who truly takes part. The spectator is an actor at the same time in an artistic performance. Here the distinction between performer and spectator is essentially overcome.

Secondly, through the work of art a presentation of truth occurs and this holds the spectator to be responsible for the truth claim that is entailed in the work of art. What comes to the fore in an experience of art is the truth of our own world and of ourselves. According to Aristotle's account, the *telos* of a tragic drama is in the catharsis of the tragic emotion, and this catharsis involves a recognition of who we are, which marks a transforming moment of self-knowledge. The mimetic identification with a character in a play, which is established by the tragic emotions, enables the spectator to recognize the tragic dimension of life – the vulnerability of humanity – and the conditions of existence that we share in common. Tragic knowledge teaches us the fragility of human existence and exposes us to what exceeds our capacities and knowledge. In tragedies we are reminded that we live in a world larger than our own making or control. By the same token, the suffering gives us an insight into the limitations of humanity, insight into the ontological distinction between the human and the divine (Tate 2008:42-43). Herein, the artworks depicting the dark and ugly side of life may be conceived to have much relevancy and implication to truth. Gadamer (1986:99), retrieving this idea of catharsis, asserts that recognizing something involves an identification between the presentation and the presented. On this basis, he argues the spectator's engagement in all art, not just in the tragic drama.

Finally, an artwork exerts its effect on the spectator. Responsive to the work of art and its claim to truth, one undergoes a genuine experience in which he or she does not remain unchanged. The experience of art involves the spectator in a claim to truth that is at once cathartic, revelatory and transformative. The following is the comments of Tate (2008:49-50):

Art addresses us ... To participate genuinely in the work of art is to submit oneself to its claim. But the claim does not just demand that we understand 'what' is presented, but that we understand *ourselves* in light of that 'what.' ... By compelling us to confront ourselves, art transforms us. The experience of art is a genuine experience that does not leave one unchanged. ... every genuine experience of art is such that I suddenly find myself defined by the work's claim "as if it mirrored a part of myself that I may hardly know how to recognize but which I cannot renounce." The self-encounter – "This is you" – is followed by the challenge – "You must change your life." This claim demands more than a change in perspective; it demands a veritable self-transformation. The work's claim to truth thus calls for a transformation that, at its most profound depth, is both a renewal and retrieval of oneself.

Thus, we are brought in the course to discuss the next feature of art – the transformative.

#### 4.3.4. Transformative

For the past two hundred years since the eighteenth century, it has been generally accepted among theorists on aesthetics that aesthetics is autonomous from other values and purposes such as the religious, the political, the ethical, etc. They have assumed that the purpose of art is to contemplate itself in 'purely' aesthetic pleasure. They have explained aesthetic pleasure as 'disinterested', and the nature of aesthetic experience as 'uninvolved'.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The autonomy of modern aesthetics brought forth the concept of fine art and the concept has been in contrast to the notion of art which prevailed previously. Shiner (2003:19ff) particularizes it in three points: Firstly, in modern aesthetics, art is assumed to be superior to craft. Before the modern understanding of art there was only a concept of craft. There was no concept of fine art. The language used to describe artworks was indistinctive from the language that we use to describe craftworks such as goldsmithing, cabinetry, and the like. By the eighteenth century, however, the distinction between art and craft, which we have become familiar with now, was established: Music, poetry, painting, and sculpture are fine arts, but cabinet-making, glass-blowing, goldsmithing, and the like, are mere crafts.

Secondly, artist has been contrasted to artisan. The artist, being considered as a more honorific title, represents one who works in the fine arts whereas an artisan denotes one who works in a craft. Here too the situation was not that before the eighteenth century. Poets and painters were thought of, along with goldsmiths and cabinet makers, as artisans rather than artist.

Finally, a contrast between the aesthetic value of a work of art and its other values emerged at this time. In ancient times such artistic practices as painting, poetry, drama, and the like, held the social, political functions as well as the religious. However, in the modern understanding, art has been insulated from any engagement with extra-artistic purposes. Art is created for its own sake, for disinterested contemplation.

The divorce from the religious value and religious function is a conspicuous feature of modern art. Modern artists were reluctant to subordinate the integrity of their work to the constraints which a church commission is likely to impose, be they dogma, tradition or institutionalized system of the church (Pattison 1991:3-4). The autonomous spirit of modern art was manifested at best by the Romanticism. The Romanticism epitomized its disappointment with the modern developments – the new science, the new capitalist economy, rationalism, and the institutional church. The Romantic artists critiqued modernity as fragmented. They were convinced that when art is liberated from subservience to extrinsic purposes (religious, political, moral and the like) and is established on its own, then art unifies what modern society fragments, i.e. fragmentation of the economic relationships, fragmentation of the political arrangements, fragmentation of the church, fragmentation in relation to nature (Wolterstorff 2008:124). However, as Pattison (1991:2) comments, “The path of modern art, pursued to the bitter end, led to no promised land; there was no rainbow bridge leading from earth to the land of everlasting beauty; there was only the bleak wasteland of aesthetic nihilism”.

Art is never autonomous. This is the point that most discussions of contemporary theological aesthetics discover and converge on. As we have already looked into, artistic beauty inherently speaks of something divine. It lies in analogy to God, who is not only the ultimate Beauty, but also the One who creates all beautiful things of the universe. He endows human beings with the sense of beauty, so they can praise and honor Him with works they have created. Art thus holds a religious implication. Such liturgical works of art as icons, altarpieces, hymns and chant are obvious examples of it.

Artists and artistic works they have made are never detached from their social, political and ethical situations (Cf. Viladesau 2000:154-156). Artists do not simply create without thought of the meaning of what they are doing. They have an idea of beauty or even a philosophical or moral idea in mind when they create (Cf. Brown 1989:70ff; Ploeger 2001:81). This is true even of the Romantic artists who were motivated by a critique against the reality of fragmentation, rationalization and oppression present in their time and tried to set an image alternative to it. Even an



artist who produces an artwork for disinterested contemplation does not transcend his or her social condition. Neither does the work transcend it (Wolterstorff 2008:125). An artwork is fused and rooted in the context of life which gives it significance whether it be the secular or religious.

A work of art can play a transformative role in ethical and political terms. It embraces the potential of being an agent of social reform by raising a prophetic critique of our fallen world and by setting an alternative image thereto (Cf. Gilkey 1998:190; Wolterstorff 2008:125). De Gruchy (2001:199-200) gives an account as follows:

the beautiful serves transformation by supplying images that contradict the inhuman, and thus provide alternative transforming images to those of oppression. We are, in a profound sense, redeemed by such beauty, for art does not simply mirror reality but challenges its destructive and alienating tendencies, making up what is lacking and anticipating future possibilities.

Art, then, has the potential to change both our personal and corporate consciousness and perception, challenging perceived reality and enabling us to remember what was best in the past even as it evokes fresh images that serve transformation in the present. This it does through its ability to evoke imagination and wonder, causing us to pause and reflect and thereby opening up the possibility of changing our perception and ultimately our lives.



Figure 24. Source: <http://www.pablocicasso.org/guernica.jsp>

With regard to political art, Picasso's *Guernica* (figure 24) would come across to our mind as a brilliant example. It surely has been referred to as the most iconic protest against the inhumanity of war, an international icon of peace, an anti-war symbol since it was created in response to the bombing of Guernica, a Basque Country village in northern Spain. *Guernica* shows the disastrous scene when German bombers and fighter planes at the behest of the Spanish Nationalist dictator Franco bombarded Guernica intensively with hundreds of kilograms of explosives, shrapnel and firebombs on 26 April 1937 at 16:30, the busiest time of the market day. There were about four hundred people on the market square alone and many more fled there when the bombs began to fall, under the impression that it would be the safest place in town. An eye witness told that the first to die was a group of women and children: "They were lifted high into the air, maybe twenty feet or so, and they started to break up. Legs, arms, hands and bits of pieces were flying everywhere" (Quoted in Cilliers 2012a:210). The town was practically razed to the ground; 71 percent of houses were destroyed and it took three days to extinguish the fires in the town. The front wall of a hotel collapsed on a group of children who were playing nearby and the cries of the mothers digging for their children in the debris, or clutching their bodies on their laps, were heart-rending. Methodically, the aeroplanes flew around the town and with machine-guns shot down everyone who tried to escape the inferno (Cilliers 2012a:210).

With the use of monochromatic color and cubist fragmentation and distortion, Picasso expresses the gruesome reality of war in an unforgettable way. The amputated head and arms at the bottom, the woman on the left holding her dead child on her lap reminiscent of Pieta, a figure crying pitifully to the heavens on the right – all these express strikingly the tragedy on that day and the horrors of war. In addition to the chaos and darkness of humanity, however, *Guernica* includes ingredients of hope as well: The flower above the sword in the middle at the bottom and the woman holding a lamp out of a window may be reminders of that there is a hope even amidst the apparent terrible hopelessness or that the darkness of human cruelty can never extinguish the light of hope. This monumental work by Picasso thus embodies a public protest against the fragmentation of our world. Further, it sets forth an action for the transformation of the fragmented reality of our world towards

the alternatives of harmony and peace (Cf. Cilliers 2012a:213-217).<sup>70</sup>

In correspondence with biblical prophecy, art lays bare the emptiness and distortion of life/world. In addition to this, it evokes hope which provokes a transformative action. Art may serve as a spur toward the transformation of life and world when it portrays their ugliness, as well as their beauty. From this perspective, the cross is claimed to be a symbol highly charged with an ethical issue. Because it displays the horrible cruelty of the sinful humanity, and at the same time, the unfathomable self-giving love of God, it pushes us to transformation. This transformative aspect of the cross has found an expression in Leon Ferrari's *La civilización occidental y cristiana* ("Western-Christian Civilization", 1965) in quite a puzzling manner:



Figure 25. Source:

[http://artinvestment.ru/en/news/exhibitions/20100716\\_leon\\_ferrari.html](http://artinvestment.ru/en/news/exhibitions/20100716_leon_ferrari.html)

<sup>70</sup> Tillich regards *Guernica* on this account as the greatest religious (or Protestant) picture in the twentieth century though it does not have religious subject matter explicitly. He states:

During one of my lectures I once was asked, "What would you think is the best present-day Protestant religious picture?" I answered almost without hesitating, *Guernica*. I named this picture, because it shows the human situation without any cover. It shows what very soon followed in most European countries in terms of the second World War, and it shows what is now in the souls of many Americans as disruptiveness, existential doubt, emptiness and meaninglessness. And if Protestantism means that, first of all, we do not have to cover up anything, but have to look at the human situation in its depths of estrangement and despair, then this is one of the most powerful religious pictures. And, although it has no religious content, it does have religious style in a very deep and profound sense (Tillich 1989a:95-96).

Ferrari made this artwork as a symbolic protest against the Vietnam War. The work sends a political, ethical and theological message to the contemporary world in a shocking and evocative way. What could it be? This artwork holds our eyes to the cross. But the cross is not as usual. It is a United States fighter jet! The cross was an instrument of subjugation in the Roman era. It was an instrument to oppress those who challenged the Roman Empire's power and authority. It was a symbol of the ideology of those who believe that the only way to bring peace was through power. Christ was crucified by the ideology of power. He was put to death by a way of life that sought after wealth, self-safety, power and control. Ferrari's crucifixion cries that things have never changed. Christ is still crucified again and again by those who want the same things – wealth, self-safety, power, control, victory, glory, all these in bloodshed. He is still nailed on the cross of military-economic violence by those who legitimize war in the name of Christ.

Thus, Art has a place in our pursuit of transformation. It is charged with ethical and political implications because an artist cannot escape from moral responsibility for his or her context. He or she cannot simply fly to egotistical occupation with aesthetic pleasure. Art plays an active role in our struggle to overcome the fallenness of our existence. It plays a part in our delightful anticipation of the final shalom which awaits us (Wolterstorff 1980:84).

The transformative feature of art is compatible with the diaconal task of the worshipping community for the world. As Christians are people called not only to serve God but also to serve the world, the worship service should be a reminder and a manifestation of the truth that two great commandments of Christ cannot be divided practically (Mark 12:28-31). In the light of this, therefore, we need to ask ourselves whether our worship services have any expression of solidarity with marginalized and suffering people in our society. We must reflect on whether we do not perhaps celebrate our services in a way of self-complacency and self-entertainment.

Liturgical aesthetics can contribute to our understanding of ethics (Cf. again the

discussion about the triad of the beautiful, good and true). With the use of art, images and symbols in worship, the church can truly observe what is happening around us, and reflect these realities in the worship service in a responsible manner. Therefore, Ploeger (2002:XIII) observes:

The keyword is aisthesis, 'observing', versus amnesia, 'the always forgotten'. Do we dare to really open our eyes – as artists do – and look around us at the world? If we do, if we have the courage to observe, we will see what 'being looked after' by God can mean for our own lives. We will have an eye for those who are suffering because of injustice and hatred in our world; we will see in a different light what is going on in our society. Dare we open our eyes and mind? Dare we observe?

Liturgical aesthetics thus does not take us away to an esoteric, otherworldly space, but places us in a reality of life and world – sometimes too terrible to put into words. It arouses us to act for transformation of the world for which Christ died.

#### **4.3.5. Anticipatory**

The beauty of the nature and artistic beauty have eschatological dimension. In other words, they anticipate the eternal beauty of the eschaton. All earthly existence – the human and nature – are yearning for the day when they are transfigured and divinized. Through the grace of God in Christ we are to be totally changed, to become like him. We are to take on his beauty (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). In similar vein, the whole creation is looking forward to the day when it would be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Cf. Rom. 8:20-22). This anticipated transfiguration of the cosmos is a favorite theme, especially in the Eastern tradition. Many theologians in the Eastern Orthodox School, viewing the earthly beauty as a glimpse of eternal beauty, have extended the eschatological significance of beauty to art.<sup>71</sup> The Western tradition, in a bit different way, has not paid much attention to the idea of transfiguration or divinization. Nevertheless it has not been utterly disowned by Western theologians. Among them,

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<sup>71</sup> Surely it can be icons that reflect this idea of divinization best, for icons do not depict the saints in their earthly reality but in their heavenly existence. Icons are depiction of the future glory of the transfigured reality (Cf. De Gruchy 2008:21).

there is Lewis (1974:12-13) who has given an account of the idea movingly as follows:

We do not want merely to see beauty ... We want something else which can hardly be put into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. ... if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day *give* us the Morning Star and calls us to *put on* the splendour of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy. At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendours we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get *in*. When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch ... We are summoned to pass in through Nature, beyond her, into that splendour which she fitfully reflects.

In addition to Lewis, Faricy (1982:98) gives consideration to the eschatological dimension of art and beauty especially in pneumatological perspective:

The Spirit that inspires art is the eschatological Spirit, the Holy Spirit who breaks through into the present from God's promised future. The Kingdom of God is to come, and yet it is here already, breaking in on us through the Holy Spirit as the pledge of future glory, and making all things new now. The Holy Spirit renews us toward the future. Partly, the Spirit renews through inspired art.

Art participates in the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in an anticipatory way. Art anticipates a reality which has not arrived yet. It creates in people a yearning for the fulfillment of the world. It inspires in us a hope that there is other, better reality intended for this world. Artists take this hope to their works in two different shapes – either portraying the earthly beauty in analogy with the longed-for beauty or exposing the ugly and horrific as a contrast to the beautiful. In the former case, artists seek to depict something in this world which is taken to be sublime or magnificent as a mirror



of the proto-beauty. *Cornfield by Moonlight* (figure 26) by Samuel Palmer may be mentioned as an example of this sort. Samuel Palmer (1805-1881) was one of British Romantic artists. He painted familiar scenes – trees, villages, the night sky – but using rich forms and vivid colours. *Cornfield by Moonlight* painted in Palmer's time at Shoreham shows a man with a smock, broad hat and staff walking with his dog through a cornfield that has already been cut and stacked in sheaves. The sky has a large waxing sickle moon and evening star, and the glimmering light lends the work an ethereal quality.



Figure 26. Source:

[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_image.aspx?image=ps225246.jpg&retpage=22818](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_image.aspx?image=ps225246.jpg&retpage=22818)

Yet, on the contrary, some works of art engender the sense of discontentment with the present reality that gives rise to a yearning for something other than the reality by depicting the ugliness and the gruesomeness (Sherry 1992:162). Take an example of Salvador Dali's *Soft construction with boiled beans: Premonition of civil war* (figure 27). When Dali painted this work, the Spanish Civil War had not yet begun. In fact, he completed the painting nearly six months before General Franco's fascist army unseated the democratically elected socialist government of the Second Spanish

Republic. Though it was likely that Dali changed the title after the military coup, a volatile climate of social and political struggle had existed in the country for years. Dali began his studies for *Soft construction with boiled beans* in 1935, sketching the hideously deformed anatomy of the colossal creature. The aggressive monster destroys itself, tearing violently at its own limbs that are shaping an outline of a map of Spain, its face twisted in a grimace of both triumph and torture. Though Dali did not openly side with the Republic or with the fascist regime, this painting is his comment on the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, one of a few works of him to deal with contemporary social or political issues.



Figure 27. Source: [http://theneedlessnessofwar.blogspot.com/2011/05/soft-construction-with-boiled-beans\\_12.html](http://theneedlessnessofwar.blogspot.com/2011/05/soft-construction-with-boiled-beans_12.html)

In the meantime, the anticipatory feature of art should not be understood in terms of exclusive future, namely that which disregards the present in favor of the future. This is because the future in Christian eschatological perspective is not something in a faraway distance, but an active force of promise and hope working in the present (Cf. Cillier 2011b:2).

The anticipatory feature of art is substantiated best in the tension between already and not yet, or in terms of liminality. Liminality is the term coined in 1909 by Arnold van Gennep when he used the term *limen* (threshold, margins) to describe human rituals marking the passage from one life cycle to another (Cf. Van Gennep 1960:192-193). After him, several authors have made use of the term. Victor Turner and Edith Turner (1978:2-3, 39) employed liminality to imply the idea of pilgrimage which is essentially anti-structure and anti-status quo but ultimately ends up with the formation of a new community, which in turn can become a new structure or new status quo that eventually might need to be deconstructed. Paul Tournier (1968:163) refers to liminality as being en route – having left your home and not yet having arrived at your destination. Eugene Peterson (2000:20) utilizes a metaphor of a trapeze artist swirling through space, in transit through mid-air, having been released from the arms of fellow trapeze artist and expecting to be caught in the firm and faithful grip of those waiting. In spite of the different illustrations, liminality, in principle, implies an ambiguous transitional stage between two situations or statuses. It has the quality of being indeterminate since the liminal belongs neither fully to one type of category nor to the other; it rather takes on aspects of both (Kunin 1998:30).

This in-between phase of liminality is pregnant with creativity and is open to a variety of possibilities, as:

Released for a moment from social structure, persons in liminality can relate to each other simply and fully as human beings and experience an intense quality of human communion usually impossible in structured society. It is in such moments of liminal *communitas* ... that persons can be free enough to reflect on their lives or society, envision new ideas and ways of doing things, and dream new dreams. Powerful rituals latent with ultimate meanings, new or old insights, and alternative ways of interpreting reality can have their powerful impact on persons in liminal *communitas* (Lee 2001:98).

This experience in liminality (and its creative possibility) is already fused in the life of faith. For example, Scriptures are filled with experiences of, and metaphors for liminality – the tomb, the wilderness and the exile, being the most representative. Although each of these scriptural metaphors conveys a different nuance of

liminality,<sup>72</sup> experiences in all of these liminal stages have a common denominator, namely “the need to let go of, leave behind or even be forcibly expelled from old ascendant forms of self-definition and identity so that God can be found in ways never before experienced. It is thus in the place of *liminality*, when stripped of all structures of support and security, that the pilgrim and God are free to encounter each other in new and life changing ways” (Franks & Meteyard 2007:220). In addition, the experience of the early Christians also attests to this in-between state of life of faith as shown in the well-known letter to Diognetus (2<sup>nd</sup> century):

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred (Kirby n.d.).

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<sup>72</sup> “The *tomb* speaks of the grief and pain and lament that are associated with leaving behind old structures of identity and security. The *wilderness* suggests the possibility of having new and surprising encounters with God in in-between places. *Exile* sharpens the sense of longing, of looking forward with anticipation to the alternative of the promised land” (Campbell & Cilliers 2012:58).

Liminality is an integral part of the life of faith, and therefore of the life of worship also. In the liminal space of worship, one has ambivalent experiences of dying and resurrection, the emptiness and fullness, God's presence (already) and His absence (not yet) (Campbell & Cilliers 2012:42). Worship as a liminal experience does not bypass the ugliness of our reality today in favor of daydreaming about a longed-for ideal tomorrow. It appreciates, rather, the fact that the reality of the future has already begun to work in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as such, that the reality of the future is already present. From this perspective, a new way of looking breaks out. The ugliness of the present reality would be reinterpreted, reframed and observed anew. This we would call in biblical terms hope.

Nowhere is hope (anticipation) better expressed than in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is surely a symbolic rite of celebrating the liminal experience in eschatological tension between already and not yet, the paradox of *deus revelatus* (God revealed) and *deus absconditus* (God hidden).<sup>73</sup> Although the Eucharist may be explained by following the lines of well-known dogmatic and ecclesiological differences and nuances, I prefer to give an example from artistic domain, i.e. *The Last Supper* (figure 28), by Ben Willikens. This work of art could be a good illustration of the anticipatory feature of the Eucharist, being an anticipatory artwork as well.

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<sup>73</sup> Refer to 5.3 for more discussion about the eschatological implication of the Eucharist.





Figure 28. Source:

[http://www.artnet.com/galleries/artwork\\_detail.asp?gid=723&aid=17932&wid=426015504&source=artist&rta=http://www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com/galleries/artwork_detail.asp?gid=723&aid=17932&wid=426015504&source=artist&rta=http://www.artnet.com)

Willikens' work, at first glance, is resonant with Da Vinci's famous painting – its setting, its perspective. However, his work is not a parody of Da Vinci's classic painting whereas Andy Warhol's *The Last Supper* is. Willikens refigured it significantly. Yes, Willikens' Eucharist table is empty. There is no Jesus, and no disciples. Accordingly it becomes the setting for an understanding of anticipatory hope. Cilliers (2011b:6) explains:

Jesus *is* in fact no longer here, but has ascended to heaven. Simultaneously, Jesus *is* in fact still here, through the coming and presence of his Spirit. The 'empty' table represents the era of the Spirit, and as such a space of expectancy; it is pregnant with possibilities; it portrays the 'presence of absence' in an aesthetical, and theological, compelling way. ... The table waits upon the arrival of God, who has already come.

Thus aesthetic expressions of art and liturgy, in the final analysis, are gifts of sharing



life – to tell people that there is a larger, permanent reality that is simply not of this world but this world is determined for. They awaken the desire for fullness of life, theologically speaking, for redemption, by exposing the dark side of human existence on one hand, and the determination of the human heart to experience the fullness of life on the other (Koch 2004:391-392).

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

From a biblical and theological point of view, worship is an encounter with the living God. Thus our fixed set of beliefs and practices are shattered in this encounter. The shattering of the fixed codes of beliefs and practices can indeed be a liberating experience in which a new creativity and unknown possibilities grow, though it can also include unsafe experiences such as paradox, ambiguity and ambivalence. In worship as a liminal experience, we remember the richness of what God did for us in the past (anamnesis) and anticipate the fullness of the future promise of God (prolepsis); we encounter other bodies as well as God the Other; we come across the paradoxical wisdom of God which even sounds foolish. To put these in a nutshell, we are reframed – our fixed ideas are shattered; new meanings are found; and behavioural changes are evoked (Cf. Cilliers 2012c:22-25).

A liturgy that never reframes may be 'in order', but it is false and fails to be a witness of the living God to our time and context. A liturgy that does not understand the art of continuous re-formation escapes from God's self-revelation in time and avoids contemporary realities and the future possibilities. It represents a particular form of anti-prophecy and just repeats history (Barnard, Cilliers & Wepener 2013:70).

Aesthetic experiences of art are of much implication to worship in the sense that art also has the power to reframe our set minds and thoughts. Revealing something truthful of God, participating God's transformative action, and anticipating the beauty and glory of the Kingdom of God which has arrived already but whose fullness is not yet completed, art brings us to the place of reframing. As we view liminal experiences of artists in works of art, as we observe their struggle to articulate their transformed or transforming consciousness and their situations en route with the

living God, the works speak something right for here and now, and take us to the encounter with the divine truth, goodness and beauty, resonating them in us. In such experiences of art we are reformed, transformed, and reframed.

## **5. Liturgical suggestions for the Korean Presbyterian churches in terms of theological aesthetics**

Today, people want to experience God in a meaningful and existential way. They want their whole being, their whole life to be touched by God. Worship is an occasion for such especially. It is expected to form a kind of culmination of encounter between God and His people. However, the sermon-dominant monotone worship might be insufficient to meet the people's need of experiencing God due to the reasons stated in 1.2 previously. People want not only to know God with their intellect, but also to sense or experience Him emotionally. People do not only want to understand dogmatic truths about God, but to experience God in an embodied manner with their whole personality.

In this regard, aesthetic experience can be of much help to religious experience in Christian worship because aesthetic experience through art may lead people to religious experience and evoke people's responses. Ploeger (2001:77) writes:

*the strongest similarity between art and religion lies in the nature of observing and experiencing, as well as in the response that works of art and religion, observed and experienced in creative freedom, evoke in human beings. The nature of this experiencing and that which is evoked by aesthetic and religious experiences can be similar.*

Liturgy is a creative work of art in and through which we are enabled to experience the redemptive beauty of God. Therefore, if art, imagery and symbolism are to find a meaningful place in Christianity, they surely have to be at the service of the church's liturgical actions (De Gruchy 2000:45). In this vein, I would like to suggest some possibilities that the Korean Presbyterian churches can make use of, following four classic movements of Christian worship, i.e. our approach to God; God's approach to us through Word; God's approach to us through Sacrament; our approach (being sent out) to the world (Webber 1992:45).

## 5.1. The approach to God (Gathering to serve God)

In the sermon-dominant worship of the Korean Presbyterian churches things leading up to the sermon are easily misconceived to be preliminary and unimportant in comparison to the sermon. However, they are never trivial. The congregation is formed into a worshipping community and approaches God together in this opening phase of worship. As we come to a worship service, we bring before God what tends to divide us – enmity, hatred, and viciousness. We need time to lay all these at the feet of Jesus. As we confess our sins together, ask for forgiveness, and celebrate reconciliation in Christ, we are restored in the intimacy with God and are prepared for the witness to God in the world. Entrance to worship indeed should have a proper place in the orders of our worship service.

The approach to God does not just form a part of the chronological sequence of worship; it is rather “a *hermeneutical factor* that colours all the other components of the sequence” (Cilliers 2009a:32). The approach to God is of critical importance because it determines the quality of the experience of encountering God. If we truly want to experience God in worship, it should not be a preliminary to be done quickly to get to the sermon, the assumed core of the worship service.

According to Webber (1992:46), this first phase of the worship service generally includes several elements in it – acts of gathering; the opening hymn (with entrance); the call to worship; the invocation; the acknowledgment of God; the confession of sin; the words of forgiveness; and an opening prayer. Having these in mind, I will suggest in the following some aesthetic and symbolic liturgies which the Korean Presbyterian churches can utilize.

### 5.1.1. Procession

A procession is a deeply embedded rite in our public life. We know from the history of nations that people welcome home their conquering leaders or sports champions with a victory parade; that they delight in commemorating especially important Days by parading; and that by banding in groups and walking in procession people bring forward a public petition or protest (Ketter 1932:502-503). In addition to the public

domain, procession is a meaningful symbolic act integrated in the religious life as well. Procession is held in some particular Christian rites and occasions: The procession to the font at baptism; the procession of the bridal party to the altar at matrimony; the procession to the grave at burial; the procession before the Eucharist; the gospel and offertory processions; or the processions on Palm Sunday and the Easter Vigil in the Holy Week (Jasper 1986:448).

Ceremonial processions are not strange to biblical themes either. The procession was not only a feature of the festive worship of Israel but a symbolization of God's kingship, God's reign over His people. Consider, for example, the procession around the walls of Jericho, a festal procession of David that is portrayed in Psalm 68 or the procession that accompanied the bringing of the ark from Kiriath Jearim and three months later from the house of Obed-Edom up to David's tabernacle in Zion. In the New Testament also, processions parallel to those in the Old Testament are found, but with one significant difference: Instead of being led by the ark, the processions center around Jesus Christ himself. The procession led by Jesus Christ riding on a donkey, surrounded with throngs of worshippers who were waving palm branches and shouting "Hosanna!" pictures the coronation of Christ as king of Israel. Moreover, it is repeated in the Revelation as the great multitude of the redeemed stands before the throne with palm branches in their hands and cries out, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 7:10). This visionary procession depicts the final reality of the victorious Christ as King over his worshipping people, which the Israelite processions symbolically anticipated (Leonard & Leonard 1993:43-44).

Although there may be various meanings in the symbolic act of procession, I want to support progressing together into the worship space in two regards here: Firstly, the procession can be a visible expression of the unity of a congregation. The formation of the worshipping body of Christ begins as we approach the Lord together and greet one another with an expression of brotherly love in the first step of the worship service. Webber (1992:46) remarks:

We are coming together from many different walks of life, from varying economic, social, and psychological conditions. As we enter, find our seats, and bow in prayer and meditation, or sing songs of gathering, the worshipping community takes shape. That body of people which God had called to be a sign of his redemption develops a common identity.

Secondly, in procession we can be reminded that we are pilgrims in this life, who are approaching the eternal home. We are travellers acting and playing a role in this world, but still journeying to our final destination. In this ongoing movement, worship is a kind of oasis, a temporary stopping point where we can be refreshed and continue our journey. This progressing together represents our moving over the threshold, crossing the border from weekday life to Sunday life, although we are definitely “to cross this threshold and margin again as we leave the gathered community and celebrate the liturgy of life, i.e. the liturgy on the street and in the market place” (Cilliers 2009a:33). The oasis is not the ultimate goal of the journey. It is the refreshment to continue the ongoing worship of life.

### **5.1.2. The symbolism of silence**

In a worship service we stand before God. This is indeed an inexpressible moment that can be best articulated in silence. However, it seems to be true in many occasions that we have no genuine understanding of who we are dealing with. A lot of worship in contemporary Korean churches has lost the sense of awe. It is pleasant, even user-friendly, but it is missing something at the heart of the practices – awe in the presence of God; awareness of living *coram Deo* (Cf. Saliers 1996:20). When people lose the sense of radical amazement at the reality of God, then liturgical familiarity follows. Without the sense of awe, “Worship services can become so identical with what happens in day-to-day life, so adapted to the fashion of the week that one no longer knows whether there is any difference between church and concert, between liturgy and television, between a worship service and shopping” (Cilliers 2009a:39).

Symbolism is requisite for us to engage with God because God whom we encounter in worship is unapproachable, awesome and a fascinating Mystery (Cf. Isaiah 6).



Because we have no words to describe the experience of God's mystery, silence is an appropriate practice of approaching God. "Perhaps we need fewer words during the time of approaching God, and more silence" (Cilliers 2009a:38). It can communicate our feelings and attitudes before God more clearly than a thousand words. To be silent in God's presence does not mean to be in a subconscious or even unconscious state of mind; on the contrary it could mean an attentive consciousness of God and a focused awe.<sup>74</sup>

In silence we escape superficiality and return to the source of our existence. Being silent before God brings us to the most basic questions of our lives, to the quest for meaning or the most profound experiences of inner peace from God. In silence we grapple with the hidden God, posing our existential questions and waiting for His answers (Cilliers 2008:25). Silence is a prerequisite for listening to God's Word and obedience. To 'be' still and know that God is God is required before you 'do' something. Therefore, we need silence in our worship services – silence to listen to God, silence to hear the neighbor, silence to hear our own voice (Vos 1990:17):

Liturgists are in constant danger and temptation of becoming institutionalized speakers, producing automatic, clerical speech. But, even if our liturgies are seemingly faultless, and our clerical procedures in order, we still are people of unclean lips, and we dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips (cf. Isaiah 6: 5). We tend to churn out epidermal, skin-deep jargon. Therefore we do not need more liturgical techniques or know-how that guarantees flamboyant success – like television evangelists, pouring out religious and pious words – we need silence. We surely do not need jackhammer services that drill and bang the truth into our fibers – we need silence. Indeed, we are so driven, but by what, by whom? We are driven, but wherefrom and whereto? Truly, we need to be re-educated in the holy uselessness of silence. We need to be freed from our conviction that God can only be praised through and amidst an avalanche of words. *Tibi silentium laus* – Lord, to you silence is praise (Cilliers 2008:28-29).

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<sup>74</sup> Silence is often misunderstood to be similar to Zen, the meditation of Buddhism, in which one tries to be unconscious of everything. It is an effort to attain higher spirituality by evacuating one's mind and heart. However, silence that is being spoken of here is not of such kind. Christian silence is rather to fill our heart and mind with the sense of God's presence, awe and love of Him.

This condensed meaning of silence and hopeful expectation inherent in it may be instantiated well by a photograph below (a self-portrait entitled *Silence* by Steph Tout, an Australian artist). The empty chair turned away from the artist catches our eye, implying someone who was sitting there. Has that person left? Or, is the person still coming? It provokes expectation. The artist is engrossed in silent contemplation about the other who is not there but is still there in her imagination, who is gone and is coming. Is she looking at a picture/text lying on the table? Is it a reminiscence of the absence/presence of the other? Does the plate of food before her, with the poured wine, carry Eucharistic undertones? The glass of water baptismal reference? The salt (and pepper) ecclesiastical significance? Whatever the case may be, she is silent, her mouth covered with her hand. In her silence lies remembrance of the other and hope for the other. Words and actions are not necessary here; as a matter of fact, they would ruin the whole experience. This is liturgy with a covered mouth (Cilliers 2012a:205-206).



Figure 29. Source: <http://blogs.theage.com.au/creativitycorner/>

### 5.1.3. The confession of sins followed by words of forgiveness

Lastly, the liturgical moment of contrition also needs to be revisited. The confession

of guilt has always been an important rite of the Protestant and the Reformed worship. Yet it seems to be either gradually phased out in many Reformed worship services at present, or at least experienced as an uncomfortable and inappropriate element, or stereotyped into a rigid liturgical order. The loss or neglect of the confession of guilt may be ascribed to some reasons such as the following: Firstly, under the influence of a success-driven society, things like weakness, failure and lament have no place. Secondly, certain God-images dominant in our theology and liturgy does not implicate the hiddenness and ambiguity of God. We tend to feel uncomfortable with the matters and not to preach on them. Thirdly, our firm stand on soteriology easily supersedes the suffering from sin in favor of salvation (Cilliers 2009a:40). In the light of these reasons, the Korean Presbyterian churches need to ask themselves whether the current mode of approaching God in their worship services is not too cursory and shallow. Is not the prevalent fashion of the open worship, for example, disposed to a certain inappropriate theological boldness, even a type of liturgical triumphalism (Cf. Cilliers 2012a:157, 160)?

The confession of sin entails more than recognition of personal sin; it rather flows from the consciousness of the brokenness of the world. War, terrorism, economic exploitation, poverty, starvation, sexual abuse, ecological abuse, etc. – the list for us to lament seems endless. Art can particularly be an imaginative language of lament to express these experiences of brokenness of humanity. Take an example of the following picture (figure 30). The photograph catches a moment of a Syrian man's heartbreak for his son who has been killed by the Syrian Army during the Syrian civil war.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, this picture is amply awakening us to the harsh realities happening on

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<sup>75</sup> The Syrian civil war, also commonly known as the Syrian uprising, is an ongoing armed conflict in Syria between forces loyal to the Syrian Ba'ath Party government and those seeking to oust it. The conflict began on 15 March 2011 with nationwide demonstrations, as part of the wider protest movement known as the Arab Spring. Protesters demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, the present personification of his family's decades-long rule, as well as the end to nearly five decades of Ba'ath Party rule. Since the Syrian Army began to quell the uprising by firing on demonstrators in April 2011, according to UN reports on 2 January 2013, more than 60,000 people have been killed, of which about half were civilians; up to 28,000 people have been missing, including civilians forcibly abducted by government troops or security forces; about 1.2 million Syrians have been displaced within the country; in addition, tens of thousands of protesters have been imprisoned and there were reports of widespread torture and psychological terror in state prisons. Assad's regime is accused of its most repressive, bloodthirsty massacre of the Syrians as Syrian forces often raid the hospitals, shooting the injured and even the doctors, and fire on funeral attendees burying and mourning the dead.

this planet. It is leading us to recognition of the plight of the contemporary world. Or, in more deepened theological consciousness, it is conjuring up an image of the aching Father who not only lost His Son but is still losing many children of His in consequence of sin.



Figure 30. Source: Sengupta 2012:9

The dimension of lament articulating the feelings and experiences on the edges of our existence and life is of critical importance to worship services. Worship which does not know the language of lament, which has no place for lament in its structure, easily becomes “liturgical kitsch, or cosmetic frivolity, or at its worst, consumer-oriented entertainment” (Cilliers 2012a:152). In liturgical language of lament we resist the absurdity of suffering and find hope. Listen to what Ackermann (2001:26) states:

Lament is more than railing against suffering, breast-beating or a confession of guilt. It is a coil of suffering and hope, awareness and memory, anger and relief, desires for vengeance, forgiveness and healing. It is our way of bearing the unbearable, both individually and communally. It is a wailing of the human soul, a barrage of tears, reproaches, petitions, praise and hopes

which beat against the heart of God. It is, in essence, supremely human.

The language of lament inheres in biblical texts and themes. In both the Old and New Testaments, lament is appreciated not only as a very natural part of human life but as a part of a healthy, good relationship with God, and therefore, an inescapable component of worship (Westermann 1974:25). “Using this language, we can speak out in an honest and liberating manner about the rawness of life, in contrast to conventional speech, which is often nothing else but a linguistic cover-up” (Cilliers 2012a:156).

Imaginative language of lament may be coupled with a reading of Scripture that shows contrasting image to the suffering world. For example, a reading of the Beatitudes can be an effective and relevant call to confession when it is read in combination with any scene of the world contrary to the categories of the blessed. Maybe the Christmas story can be read against the background of scenes of violence and war. Or the Decalogue also can be used meaningfully in such a way that each commandment is repeated by the congregation in the first person or is responded with *kyrie eleison* (meaning ‘Lord, have mercy on us!’). In this method of chiaroscuro, the Word of God can be brought into sharpened profile, and personal or social sins thereby can be freed of its vagueness (Cilliers 2012a:160).

The liturgy of confession of guilt should be balanced with words of forgiveness because God affirms us on His grace and compassion. In approaching God we are acknowledged and formed as the people of God liberated from the yoke of sin. This is part and parcel of the basic condition of a worshipping community. Chrysostom articulates this movingly:

The people, once less sensitive than stones, are raised to the worthiness of angels in one deed of God’s grace, simply through God’s Word and their faith, without any merit on their side. *This* is the glory and richness of the mystery of Christ. It is like when a scruffy and mange dog, ugly and deformed, which cannot even move himself anymore but lies with four legs in the air, is instantly transformed into a human being and set on a kingly throne. It is like when people who once worshipped the stars and the earth,



have now gained insight that they are better than the heavens and the earth and that the whole world is there at their service. Once they decayed in the dungeons and chains of the devil, but now, of a sudden, they stand high above him, and they flagellate *him*. First they were the captives and slaves of the demons, but now they have become part of the body of the Lord that reigns over angels and archangels. First they were without knowledge of God, now, in an instant, they sit on the throne *next* to God (Quoted in Cilliers 2009a:42).

In approaching God, we are reminded, on the one hand, of our failures and the status quo of the world distant from God's will, but on the other hand we are also reminded of our new identity in Christ, no longer as slaves of sin but as beloved children of God.

## **5.2. The ministry of the Word**

Christianity is fundamentally rooted in the Word. God spoke to His people through spiritual leaders and prophets of Israel. Then the Word finally was incarnated to engage himself with them directly. God still speaks to us through the Bible. In Scripture God is actively present, making His will and presence known to us. The Christian tradition – especially the Reformed – has appreciated this significance of the Word of God in its worship. Consequently, the ministry of the Word has become a critical point of its worship service. Yet, despite putting lots of emphasis on the Word in worship, the Korean Presbyterian churches seem to be struggling with overfamiliarity with Scripture. People have lost the wonder and excitement of God's Word. They feel bored and dull with preaching. Possibly, aesthetics and symbolic liturgy would give us a breakthrough of the situation.

### **5.2.1. Public reading of Scripture**

Firstly, there should be a revival of the public reading of Scripture. The ministry of the Word in the worship service embraces the public proclamation of Scripture as well as the expounding sermon. However, in the Korean Presbyterian worship the liturgy of public reading of Scripture is almost lost and the Scripture reading is done only with the text for sermon. The Scripture should be announced and proclaimed to be heard



in the ear of the congregation as much as possible. It is God's speaking, His words of grace. It discloses His sacrifices and love done for us. It draws us anew into the experience of our belonging to Him. When the Scripture is read, we are told that God is working in our life today just as He has worked in the past.

In order to implement public reading of Scripture in worship, following the plan of lectionary readings can be a good way to do it. One of the advantages of utilizing lectionary is that it forces us to deal with the whole biblical story. If you follow the lectionary, your congregation would automatically read and hear most passages of the Bible to be announced in three years (Cf. Lee 2010:60-61). The adoption of the lectionary would make the liturgy of Scripture reading a major aspect of our worship, giving consistency according to the cycle of the Christian year.

To make the reading of Scripture more effective and more participatory, it would be a good idea to establish a lay readers' group or to employ a way of dramatic reading. The manner in which we read Scripture publicly is important. It is not something to stumble over or to be read in a careless way. Therefore, it is good to have a group of people committed to and well-trained in reading Scripture. Besides this, a dramatic reading is also of advantage. When reading the narrative passages like Gospel lessons, some persons from the congregation can take the roles of characters in the story and read like a kind of play. This method can involve the congregation as active participants too (Webber 1992:74, 93).

### **5.2.2. Imaginative preaching**

Preaching is basically a verbal mode of communication in which speaking and hearing dominate; but it is never insulated from non-verbal factors of communication. Here are three data evidential of it: Firstly, even the Reformed and Puritan traditions illustrate that preaching is a multi-sensual activity. Preachers in the traditions have practiced sermon as a form of art. For example, Calvin used in his masterpiece, *Institutes of Christian religion* many rhetorical devices such as metaphor, personification, resounding of words and phrases, alliteration, and so on. Calvin's usage of words is "picturesque and pleasing to the taste" (Breen 1957:16). Puritan

preachers' usage of words denotes similar fashion. They also have developed their sermon in rhetorical eloquence with a number of tropes although they wanted to differentiate their own sermon from that of the Anglican preachers, criticizing it as 'pretty' and 'witty'. Puritan preachers' ministry of the Word too exemplifies that preaching is a linguistic art which appeals to multiple senses as well as hearing.<sup>76</sup>

Secondly, words create (inner) images. As we have looked in Luther's remarks already, word provokes images unavoidably in the mind's eye. The Word of God that evokes inner images in those who read it or listen to it carries a vision 'remembered' and 'hoped' in the heart of people. Furthermore, the vision securely kept in the heart might help them to live a life of faith vibrantly especially in times of temptation and affliction.

The third evidence of preaching as the integration of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication is statistical data. According to Bosch (1977:12), 55 percent of the message transmitted between people is altogether nonverbal (including gestures, so-called body language, clothing, facial expression, posture); 38 percent is vocal (tone of voice, pitch, speed of speech, modulation, inflection, etc.); and a mere 7 percent is verbal (the actual cognitive content of the words used in communication). Even though there may be an objection to the proportions of the statistics presented, one thing indisputable is that any form of verbal communication (including preaching) is never purely a matter of language or the content of speech. A variety of non-verbal factors are involved there in chorus. Therefore, succinctly speaking, we not only hear preaching; we also see, taste, touch and smell preaching imaginatively.

Then, what should preachers do for an effective preaching that ignites the imagination of people? Reiersen (1988:60-68) makes three suggestions in this regard. Firstly, preachers should use mythic language rather than discursive language. Mythic language expresses itself in creative imagination whereas discursive language does in rational and logical thinking. Mythic language is more

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Reiersen (1988:75ff) for specific examples and further discussions of the artistic feature of the Puritan preaching.

subjective and intuitive than discursive language. It involves a kind of thinking process which is charged with intuitive and sensory experience. The focus of mythic language is put on the experience in its fullness. Accordingly, in this category many artistic devices that furnish images and sensation are included. Preaching is in need of utilization of mythic language because mythic language, dealing with the realm of experience and emotion, reveals the depth of meanings in life. When we preach, therefore, artistic techniques and rhetorical devices are not mere addendum or adornment; they are the indispensable language forms which can communicate fully the depths of life and faith.

Secondly, preachers should do well to utilize metaphorical language. As mentioned earlier, metaphorical language is an absolute necessity when we want to speak of realities such as God, the divine, spirituality and the like because they are elusive and never able to be fully grasped in reason. Therefore, we need stories, parables, symbols and analogies in order to reach the transcendent realities. Metaphor bridges between two entities, between the heaven and earth, or to speak in terms of time, the past, present and future. It helps us to understand familiar things in a new way by creating tension between the entities. Viewed from this angle, it adds value to preaching because it may enable us to overcome the familiarity with the biblical stories. Perhaps it makes us listen to the Word of God in a fresh way.

Thirdly, preachers ought to foster a variety of modes of knowing, i.e. sensation, thinking, feeling and intuition.<sup>77</sup> These four functions, which constitute comprehensive knowing, are related to how we view the world, how we take in information and feelings, and how we decide about things. Preaching, then, should

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<sup>77</sup> Adopting Carl G. Jung's theory, Reiersen (1988:66-68) articulates four dimensions of a complete knowing: Sensation is the function by which people observe things; feeling has to do with judgment of the value of the objective world; thinking is the function that categorizes and assigns meaning to perceived elements; intuition is associated with the aesthetic function like imagination and innovation. The sensation and thinking functions relate to the descriptive task of theology. Through these functions human beings observe their world and seek to define it and understand it. Art may have implication in this task by opening up the richness and complexities of the created world. The feeling function correlates with the critical task of theology in which we make critical judgments of value on life. Art may assist theology in this task by depicting the human crisis and predicament. The intuition function pertains to the constructive task of theology. Through this function we imagine and hope for new possibilities and alternatives. In this task, too, art can be of great help to illustrate a vision of wholeness and to implant an eschatological hope in us.

be a process of this comprehensive knowing by observing our world and life, making a critical judgment upon them, and constructing an alternative image of hope of our wholeness.

Unquestionably, preaching is a crucial component of worship as people respond to the Word moved by the words of the preacher. Therefore, it is right for the preacher to try to find every possible way to communicate the good news effectively. Stories, metaphors, image-rich words, pictorial images, structures of sermons themselves, etc. – these are not redundant adornments; but they are essential elements to a sermon communicating gospel. They make the sermon come alive to the congregation, and the result? The people would be nourished with the great power and depth of the Word of God.

### **5.3. The ministry of the Sacrament**

In addition to the ministry of the Word, the Sacrament is another hinge on which the worship service revolves. The decent celebration of the Eucharist was an essential part of a reform of worship in the sixteenth century Reformation. Since the Roman Catholic Church did not let the laity commune in normal Mass and allowed them to partake in the Communion only once a year (In this case they received only the bread, not the wine.), the Reformers broke with the Roman Catholic Church and tried to return the worship service to ordinary people of the congregation by frequenting the Eucharist and allowing them wine as well as bread (McKee 2003:7-8).<sup>78</sup> Calvin, for instance, believed that the true church is found where the Word of God is rightly preached and heard; besides, the Sacrament is administered according to Christ's institution. He believed that it would be ideal to celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday.

Differently from what Calvin desired, however, the Reformed churches have historically not fully appreciated or put into practice the insight that the true church is

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<sup>78</sup> Of course, the division between the clergy and the rest of the congregation was not the only cause of the Protestant reform of worship. The Reformers criticized the sacramental system of the Roman Catholic worship also in which the church's Sacraments or good deeds such as Masses and pilgrimages to relics of saints functioned as the means of salvation.

marked by Word and Sacrament. The Eucharist, being only occasionally present in Sunday worship, has been relegated to the fringes of worship and its significance is often restricted. They have thus tended to be not churches of Word and Sacrament, but churches of the Word alone.<sup>79</sup>

By the same token, the sermon is the gem and all-important feature of the worship service in the Korean Presbyterian tradition. All else is the setting designed to prepare the audience for the moment when the houselights would be dimmed, the pulpit illuminated, and the preacher would rise and show off the gem polished and perfected during the preceding week. When the sermon is over, there is little left to do except sing a concluding hymn, receive the blessing, and leave (Skudlarek 1981:65-66). Many Korean Presbyterian churches regard the Eucharist not as the normal component for the weekly gathering of Christians, but as a quarterly or half-yearly appendage to a preaching service.

The Korean Presbyterian churches are in pressing need of a vibrant sacramental theology being aware of the fullness of Word and Sacrament. Yet the theology as such would be hardly sufficient. On its top, the 'practice' of the Sacrament must be adjoined because thoughts and words about the Sacrament are not the celebration of the Sacrament. It is not speculation but the practice of baptism and Eucharist that discloses the presence of Christ, that deepens faith and faithfulness. In order for the Lord's Supper to nourish the church, it must come into frequent practices (Small 2003:318, 323).

The Sacrament has some significant implications to the life and worship of a congregation. Firstly, the Sacrament inspires communal mind. Meals are not

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<sup>79</sup> If the Word and Sacrament together constitute the heart of the church's true and faithful worship, neglect of either one of them can lead to deformation of the other. Small (2003:315) aptly states:

... when either word or sacrament exists alone it soon becomes a parody of itself. We Reformed Christians are aware of how easily the sacraments can become manipulative superstitions in churches where sacraments are exalted and preaching is minimized. But we may be less aware of how easily preaching and teaching can deteriorate into institutional marketing or human potential promotion or bourgeois conformity in churches that magnify preaching while marginalizing baptism and Eucharist. Reformed neglect of the sacraments has led to a church of the word alone, a church always in danger of degenerating into a church of mere words.

individual but communal by nature. Many biblical writers present the picture of God's great feast at the end of time when people will come from every corner of the world and will eat in the Kingdom of Heaven (Cf. Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29; Rev. 19:9). The Eucharist is a foretaste of this heavenly banquet. It has a meaning of commemorating the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross, of course, but the central purpose of the sacrifice/meal is celebratory and joyful fellowship with God as well as with fellow humans. Festive meal and sacrifice usually go together and are understood as a single ritual as such just like in the Passover meal. The killing or sacrifice is irrevocably necessary for the ritual, but the ultimate purpose is the fellowship between God and His people (Parts of the sacrifice is offered to God while the remainder is shared and eaten by participants.). God is understood to be there and share in the meal with those who eat the food (Cooke & Macy 2005:90-91). The Eucharist implicates this festive dimension in its enactment. However, in the Korean Presbyterian churches, the Eucharist tends to be a gloomy exercise in silent introspection with a penitential focus. They have failed to appreciate the other side of the Eucharist as a festive meal of a community probably because they think of it exclusively in terms of 'the Last Supper'. At this point especially, biblical studies may be helpful for us. The Gospels tell of Jesus feeding several thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish, and the stories of Jesus eating with Zacchaeus and with Mary and Martha. In Matt. 11:19 and Luke 7:34, he is accused of being a drunkard and a glutton, eating and drinking with sinners. Besides, contemporary liturgical theologians pay special attention to Jesus' meals after the resurrection, especially the dinner with the disciples at Emmaus, as a model of the Eucharist (Luke 24:13-35). Understanding the Eucharist in light of the stories, the early Christians assembled on Sunday morning and experienced the body of Christ in their midst, around the table. In the meal, they were joined to him in his death and resurrection, were fed by him and received nourishment for growth in love of God and love of neighbors (Cf. Ramshaw 2009:210; Skudlarek 1981:77; Small 2003:321). The following is a poem written by a Korean writer, 김지하 (Jeeha Kim). Take note of how it appreciates the communal nature of a meal<sup>80</sup>:

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<sup>80</sup> In this poem, the communal nature a meal has is closely related with ethical issue (e.g. a matter of economic justice). With respect to the ethical claim of the Eucharist, refer to the third implication of the present discussion.



밥이 하늘이다	Food Is Heaven
밥이 하늘입니다.	Food is heaven.
하늘을 혼자 못 가지듯이	As the heaven cannot be kept to yourself
밥은 서로 나눠 먹는 것.	food is to be shared.
밥이 하늘입니다.	Food is heaven.
하늘의 별을 함께 보듯이	As the stars in the sky are to be enjoyed with others
밥은 여럿이 갈라 먹는 것.	food is to be shared with many.
밥이 하늘입니다.	Food is heaven.
밥이 입으로 들어갈 때에	To have food
하늘을 몸 속에 모시는 것.	is to take heaven in your body.
밥이 하늘입니다.	Food is heaven.
아아, 밥은 모두 서로	Ah! Food
나눠 먹는 것.	is to be shared with one another.
	(Translated privately by the researcher)

The Holy Communion is thus a corporate event in which the whole congregation is required to discern, respond and act as active participants. In the Lord's Supper as a community meal all are invited and all participate fully. We have communion not only with Christ but with fellow Christians as well. As we share bread and wine, we are re-formed as the body of Christ and sealed together as the community of the new covenant in his blood.<sup>81</sup> Moore-Keish (2005:109) describes the last scene in the

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<sup>81</sup> In light of this corporate nature of the Sacrament, Small (2003:322) supposes that a lack of the unity of the Reformed churches and their history of repetitive splits can be ascribed to being a church of Word alone. He asserts that the Reformed churches, so neglectful of the Sacrament, have become tied to words, fought about, fought with words and fractured into pieces of denominations. Moreover, Falconer (2003:152) critiques that the Reformed churches' practice of the Communion as such is individualistic. It, associating between being catechized and personal qualification for participation in

movie *Places in the Heart* (1984) that would be an excellent illustration of the communal feature of the Communion:

[The movie] tells the story of Edna Spalding, a recently widowed white mother of two in a small Texas town during the Depression. Against all odds, with the help of a transient black man and a disagreeable blind boarder, she manages to plant and harvest her forty acres of cotton in order to keep her home. Around the edges of this central story, characters in the movie engage in murder, adultery, theft, assault, and plain old mean-spiritedness. The final scene shows a congregation in a local country church gathered to celebrate communion. As the cubes of bread and the tiny glasses of grape juice are passed down the pews, the camera focuses on one face after another: first, anonymous members of the community; then Edna's sister, who passes the tray to her cheating husband; then members of the Ku Klux Klan, who share the elements with the black man they had beaten up; then the Spalding children; then Edna herself; and finally Edna's husband, the town sheriff who had been shot and killed at the beginning of the film. Sheriff Spalding then quietly passes the bread and cup to the young black man who shot him with the words, "The peace of Christ."

"In that understated scene", she further writes, "the living and the dead, black and white, young and old, those who have sinned and those who have been sinned against, all sit together ... to share the Lord's Supper" (Moore-Keish 2005:109-110). This is truly a picture of the feast in which God's people come to achieve unity.

Secondly, the Eucharist instills hope enacted in eschatological tension. Clearly, the celebration of the Eucharist recalls the past. It transports the present congregation back to the decisive moment in the past when Jesus ate and drank with sinners, when he gave himself as the bread of life on the night of his arrest, or when they crucified the Lord. However, the Eucharist is also about something we anticipate that he is going to do in the future. He is going to call his people out from every nook and corner of the world and let them have at the great feast so that they enjoy with him forever.

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the celebration, implies that it is an event for members of the church rather than for the community as such.

Rooted in the pattern of God's work in the past, the Eucharist flavors our present life with a hope of the fullness of God's salvation (Cf. Wainwright 1983:127). The deliverance enacted and remembered in the Eucharist encourages us to live in the horizon of final triumph and liberation. As we eat at the Lord's Supper, we re-live this event of deliverance mystically and sacramentally, find a triple anamnesis, a triple memorial, that is, of a past deliverance regarded as typical, of a present deliverance through the sacramental action of the Eucharistic meal and of a coming salvation in the Day of the Lord. Not only summoning the past event of deliverance to the present but also allowing the future promise of salvation to break into the present, the Eucharist affects people to live in faith and hope (Cf. Purcell 2001:141-143; Van Wengen-Shute 2003:101).

Possibly the epiclesis (literally, 'appeal' or 'call') is a critical part of the Communion liturgy in regard that it embodies this eschatological hope in the form of a prayer. In the prayer, we not only appeal to the work Jesus did two thousand year ago, we also call upon the Holy Spirit to sanctify bread and wine in the present and look forward to the full redemption which is to come in the future. Refer to the following epiclesis in *Book of Common Worship* (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 1993:152):

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us  
that this meal may be  
a communion in the body and blood of our Lord.  
Make us one with Christ  
and with all who share this feast.  
Unite us in faith,  
encourage us with hope,  
inspire us to love,  
that we may serve as your faithful disciples  
until we feast at your table in glory.

In addition to the relation between Christian existence now and the life of the Kingdom then, the Eucharist provides language for expressing the tension between

presence and absence, or indeed presence of absence. Christ is present in the Sacrament and in the church as realistically as possible. He gives himself to us in bread and wine and we receive this presence in faith. Truly, he is “closer to us than the clothes we wear” in the Eucharist (Cilliers 2012a:24). Simultaneously, however, he transcends the sacramental elements. The church will never possess Christ by having the meal. He is never in our grip. Through the Eucharist we learn that the ‘holiness’ of Christ’s presence transcends the confinements of our time and place. Hence, the repeated call in Eucharistic prayer to lift up our hearts: *Sursum corda* (meaning ‘Lift up your hearts!’). This versicle can play an important role in our practice of the Eucharist by letting us acknowledge God as the Other. In the Eucharist, thus, we are incorporated into the faith in the present absent, or immanent transcendent God (Brinkman 2009:8-11).

Thirdly, the Eucharist places ethical claims on our lives. It is not only a gracious gift, but also a call to ethical living of the church. Purcell (2001:144-146) affirms this in his notion of transubstantiation:

The community which celebrates Eucharist finds itself drawn and directed away from itself towards God and towards others. ... In the crucifixion Christ gives himself – in obedience to the will of the Father – “for-you.” Thus, in the Last Supper narrative, we read “This is my body given for-you;” “This is my blood shed for-you” (Lk 22:20). ... this “for-you” structure of the eucharist ... has implications for our understanding of the structure of human subjectivity which is caught up in the Eucharist event, and is not only affected but also *effected* by participation in the event of the Eucharist. ... the focal point is not so much the elements of bread and wine but rather the effect upon those who receive the bread and wine as Body and Blood and are thereby themselves a transubstantiation. I would like to pursue this with the intention of developing an ethical understanding of eucharistic subjectivity. ... the structure of the eucharistic event is the model of who we are called to be.

The Eucharistic transubstantiation Purcell deals with here should not be understood in terms of ontology. It means the ethical transformation that the Eucharist initiates in people rather than an ontological change of the self (Cf. Purcell 2001:145). The Eucharist requires of whoever partakes in it a radical self-critique and charges them

with renewing their norms and patterns of life. Christ's expiatory act of giving himself for others inevitably influences and shapes the lives of the people who choose to respond to it. In the crucial transcendence of the Eucharist we transcend not simply towards God, but also towards others, for love of God cannot be so quickly distinguished from love of others. We might be assimilated into the 'for-you' lifestyle by the Eucharist as Christ offered himself 'for you and for all'.

The Eucharist is thus the basis of our engagement with issues of justice and humanization. In light of God's abundant grace of feeding us, the Communion can help the church to think about the matter of economic inequality or the growing problem of starvation around the society (Cf. Ramshaw 2009:209-210). For an exemplary response to such issues, Moore-Keish (2005:120) introduces a congregation in North America that has revived a Eucharistic practice of the ancient church:

members of the congregation bring many loaves of bread to church on Communion Sundays, and of those many loaves, one is shared by the congregation at the Communion. The rest of the loaves are taken after worship and distributed to the hungry of the community through a nearby food pantry. In this way members of the congregation are living out their role as participants in the reign of God here and now, feeding the hungry in the expectation of the day "when all will sit at table in the kingdom of God."

Possibly, resistance against abuses of creation can be another reaction of the church to the Sacrament. According to Conradie (2009:2, 4), the Protestant theology has marginalized the theme of creation and tends to downplay it merely as a stage on which God's salvific drama is being played out. He further states that this lack of interest in creation theology is attributed to a narrow pietistic notion of salvation as personal sanctification; an exclusive focus on ecclesiology; a sharp contrast between Scripture and natural theology. The Eucharist, however, embraces the physical realm – the entire creation. The physical reality is part and parcel through which God engages our entire selves and encounter us. In the Eucharist, we take bread and wine – gifts of creation. Creation is implicated in our sacramental practice because when we encounter the presence of Christ with bread and wine, we anticipate that

not just these sacramental elements but all of God's created order will bear the presence of God one day. Therefore, the Eucharist urges us to be a church ecologically responsible. "Just as at the Lord's Supper we should handle the elements reverently, so when we are sent forth from our corporate worship into the world, we should show similar reverence to the whole of God's creation" (Vischer 2003a:302).

Along these lines, hence, we are naturally brought to the last step of worship.

#### **5.4. The approach to the world (Being dismissed to serve the world)**

Worship, in a sense, implies a withdrawal from the world. The congregation, distancing the matters of the world, gathers in order to concentrate minds and hearts on praising God. Yet in another sense, the congregation is equipped to be sent into the world in worship. It gathers to be sent again. At the last trajectory of the worship service, the congregation is dismissed to go back to the normal life in which it engages in an even more determined service to the world – this would be called in other words the 'worship of life' or 'liturgy after the liturgy'.<sup>82</sup> The life of the worshipping community, thus, is distinguished by the double movements – gathering for worship and being sent into the world, and these two movements cannot be separated (Vischer 2003b:415).

Then, what can be a way of reflecting the church's commitment to the world when it is dismissed from worship? Most likely, intercession can be a particular means for the worshipping community to relate to the world. The intercession in the service can be the first step toward an engaged action that can be resulted in concrete projects with meaningful consequences. When offering our intercessions, we form a bridge between the church's worship and its vocation in the world. Through lifting up to God

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<sup>82</sup> Reformed understanding of worship especially appreciates this public dimension. It is believed in the Reformed tradition that God is the Master of the entire world and history, and that no aspect of human life is exempt from God's claim. Therefore, the Reformed understanding of *leitourgia* has twofold meaning – worshipping God and diaconal mission in the world (Cf. Falconer 2003:155).



the needs of people, the concerns of neighbors and strangers, we may acknowledge that the church exists for the sake of God's mission to the world. Intercession gives voice to the church's public vocation of witnessing to the world. Vischer (2003b:417-418) remarks:

Through the prayer of intercession the community brings itself, the church, and the entire world before God. It prays that God may make manifest the power of the Spirit, that the church may be strengthened, and especially that all those suffering from illness and despair may experience God's forgiving and healing presence. It gives room to its worry about the future and implores God to set limits to human irresponsibility and prevent further exploitation, violence, and destruction of life. As the psalmists did, it asks God to impose restraint on the "enemies" of the gospel. At all times intercession has included prayers for the government of the country, asking that God would empower the authorities to fulfill their tasks. This intercession is to be understood as an act of loyal solidarity. It becomes an act of political critique when government authorities transgress the function they are mandated to fulfill. Intercession especially acquires a political character when victims of political or economic oppression are mentioned explicitly and by their names.

Intercession can be significantly aided by aesthetic mediation. If we want to understand what is going on around the community or if there is a need to call forth congregants' attention to political and social issues around, works of art can be of special help to let them see the matters clearly and to awaken their consciousness and responses. Note, for example, the following work of art entitled *Homeless Jesus* (figure 31) that could interest people in an issue of the homeless.



Figure 31. Source: Kuns verk oor Jesus erg omstrede 2013:5

This life-size sculpture by a Canadian artist Timothy Schmalz gives us a shock of recognition of Jesus lying on a bench in a park. From afar, there is nothing to this artwork, which tells that the figure can be 'Jesus'. But at a closer look, the crucifixion wound on feet identifies it as Jesus. Although this artwork, bringing quite a controversy, has been rejected by some churches in Canada (probably for the same reason as in the case of *Man of Sorrows: Christ with AIDS*), Schmalz's intention with the image is clear: Homelessness is a big problem in our society. To see many homeless people must be an experience that deeply affects the life of the church and its obligation of love to neighbors. Schmalz states, in reference to Matthew 25:40, 'When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me', that this image is a visual translation of the powerful message on the Christian ethic.

## **6. Conclusion: Towards an art of worship**

### **6.1. Summary of findings**

Given that the belief that we are made in the image of God is at least as old as the first chapter of Genesis, there is no biblical basis to refuse the assertion that humans express themselves imaginatively. Being consistent with that, Christian worship has developed along aesthetic lines. The Christian history shows that people have designed the forms, contents and environment of worship to be filled with artistic expressions. The non-verbal mediation has been as much essential for relations between the divine and human as the verbal mediation is. Visual art, imagery and symbolism might act as adequate expressions of worship of the infinite God when word often falls flat in carrying the weight of God's mystery and love as well as our love in, reverence to Him.

However, the Korean Presbyterian worship, which has a sermonic focus, has failed to appreciate the artistic feature of Christian worship. It has therefore entailed problems such as verbalism, intellectualism, disengagement of the congregation, and inattention to the Sacrament: The Korean Presbyterian worship attaches an exclusive importance to the verbal communication without decent consideration to the significance of the non-verbal communication or multi-senses in conveying Christian truth; the Korean Presbyterian worship has naturally become like a school lecture with an intellectual focus and fallen into a kind of rational lesson rather than a holistic experience; the sermon-dominant worship of the Korean Presbyterian churches has such a monological flow that parishioners become just the audience in it; the Korean Presbyterian liturgy does not take the Eucharist into account on the regular basis of Sunday worship. So used are the Korean Presbyterian churches to engaging with preaching and word that it is all too easy for them to forget that visual dimension of art, imagery and symbolism is integral to Christians' experiences and faith for most Christian history.

Against such a backdrop I have made an attempt to provide aesthetics as a

dialogical partner of theology as well as a remedial approach to the Korean Presbyterian worship services. Art as a *locus theologicus* opens up another approach to doing theology, i.e. to discerning revelation, instilling faith and hope, and awakening moral questions and sacramental reality in our world. With visual and other artistic expressions, art can provide exciting and new theological sources, enhance our understanding of divine presence and our notion of theology itself.

Unfortunately, though, the value of aesthetic experience has been left out of the Protestant theological enterprise in particular. Generally understood as 'discourse about God', theology has been carried out in systematic, scientific fashion often exclusive of anthropological, cultural and experiential dimensions. Apart from a few rare exceptions, art and the concept of beauty have been neglected by Protestants – at least until recently. The Protestant tradition has viewed God in such a way that we cannot touch or grasp Him. Everything is said to be taken on faith and there is nothing to 'see' (Bychkov 2008:xv).

However, this study has claimed that art, imagery and symbolism must not be repudiated in our worship and theology for several reasons: First of all, they are based on the Trinitarian affirmation of our physical reality – the body. The creation of God, the incarnation of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit all alike attest that the body and bodily senses are never inferior add-ons to the soul and mind. God created the universe as beautiful. He is the author of all beauty; Christ the Son of God became like us taking on human flesh. He has shown us the beauty of his kenosis on the ugliness of the cross; and the Spirit of God came upon his people and inhabits in them until the purpose of God's work in history is accomplished with a restoration of the beauty, integrity and wholeness of the created order.

Viewed from this Trinitarian perspective, we can approve of the embodied quality of art, imagery and symbolism as integral to our worship and theology. Doing worship/theology through art affirms and takes as its basis the very fact that the human being experiences and learns through the senses. Body, soul, mind and spirit, all that makes up our being, is intimately related, connected and sacred. An

embodied worship/theology thus places it against the history of a dualistic outlook on matter and spirit, body and soul, natural and supernatural. Theology through art challenges and replaces a dualistic perception of the world with a more holistic one (Thiessen 2001:215).

Secondly, creation of works of art and imagery is understood as a manifestation of *imago Dei*. As image bearers of God, human beings are given the gifts of creativity and imagination. With these gifts, they create things, artworks and technologies; they build cultures; they discover knowledge and develop sciences. These are things that distinguish them from other creatures and they are most Godlike in these creative, imaginative activities. Therefore, it is inevitable for humans to be creative.

Thirdly, imaginative thinking is a neurological given to human beings. We think in images. When processing information, both hemispheres of the brain work together in an integral manner. Even in listening to the most abstract words people perceive the concept with the collaboration of imaginative thinking. Therefore, it would be odd to categorize people into left-brain or right-brain type, and to lateralize word and image to a matter of either/or.

Fourthly, the Bible itself demonstrates that images are deeply engraved in the communication between God and human. God adopted visible signs and symbols to reveal Himself to the Israelites. God, legislating the sacrificial rituals, gave the design of tabernacle as a place to meet the people and inspired the craftsmen to make it with artistic ingenuity; God also spoke of His will through visions prophets had; and finally, the Word of God became flesh, that people may see the glory of God with their own eyes and touch with their own hands (1 John 1:1). Thus, a variety of images, symbols, parables, metaphors, etc. included in the Bible prove that the Bible is not only a word book but an image book as well.

Lastly, theological appropriation of the visual is demanded for a cultural cause. The visual culture is the air we breathe. Visual images, positive and often negative, confront the human being daily and have become and are becoming increasingly

more powerful through the media of television, advertisement and computers. It is high time then for theologians and churches to treat and value the artistic image – paintings, sculptures, installations, films – as a relevant source of and in theology because people in contemporary culture are looking for an imaginative vision of life and reality, one they can see and feel, as well as understand. Images on the television, computer screen or smartphone do not necessarily work in a good, helpful way. These images may exercise power differently. They can be idolatrous when they communicate falsehood and induce worship of things other than God. In opposition to the many destructive images that surround us, therefore, churches and theologians are responsible to offer something different, something life-giving and life-affirming, a critical view of our existence, a call to change, a glimmer of hope, an anticipation of what may be and could be.

Along the line of the reasons above, I have enumerated also five features of aesthetics that might have significant implications to the reform of the Korean Presbyterian worship services. Firstly, artistic works can be a meaningful part of worship because our apprehension of Christian truth can be enlarged as the revelatory power of images and symbols applied in art points beyond the purely aesthetic to ultimate reality and meaning. In order to glimpse the invisible, we need to look as deeply as possible into the visible. The beauty in nature or the work of art is to be seen as pointing us to and uncovering something of God. Something of the loving goodness of God shines through our experience of beauty in art and the world. This is why we are inevitably moved to put ourselves in the way of such experiences. We deeply long not only for such beauty but for relationship with the personal presence lying beneath such beauty. As a result, the experience of great beauty often moves unbelievers to seek God, just as it often moves believers to praise God (Dyrness 2001:142).

Worship embodied in the visual image and matter, i.e. in a concrete painting, sculpture, installation etc. implies a radical 'yes' to creation, to creativity, and to the capacity of the imagination. It is a positive affirmation of our senses, of the aesthetic, of the fact that spirit, even the divine Spirit, can be perceived in and through the material. It is the seemingly paradoxical assertion that ultimate reality or, more



specifically, the invisible face of the always-greater God, is glimpsed and known in the bits and pieces of earthly existence. It acknowledges God's deepest desire, love and yearning for us as created beings and our desire for the divine and for union with one another. This is what visual art and images can powerfully reveal (Thiessen 1999:281).

Secondly, art, imagery and symbolism are congruous with the holistic mode of our existence and experience. Aesthetic experience has intimate relationship with worship experience because the human totality – intelligent-affective-sensate-corporeal being of human – is appreciated in both. God communicates to us through our bodies and senses. Faith in the Word-made-flesh allows us to celebrate the wonder and beauty of the sensuous, even if and because we fully understand that the face of God will never be fully revealed in our earthly life. Without the help of physical, aesthetical mediations, we cannot know, encounter or worship the infinite God.

Thirdly, in aesthetic experience people become active participants, not onlookers. An artwork is essentially participatory because it performs to spectators; it discloses the truth of our world and the situation of ourselves; and its claim to truth has influence on spectators.

Fourthly, art has a transformative characteristic. Because a work of art grows from the context of its creator, whether political, ethical or religious, it is never autonomous. It rather includes in it a kind of concern for the reality of life and the world. An artwork pursuing a better reality can spur us to transformative action. Through the alternative worlds of works of art we might not only reconsider the qualities, values and purposes of this present world but be encouraged to do something for the change of the world. Indeed, it is the failure of love, the failure of living in God, or the brute fact and the disgrace among humanity, the ever-present reality of evil which some works of art capture, dealing with issues such as war, peace, disease, poverty, gender, social justice and environment. They unmask the distortion and ugliness of the reality. Yet, the ultimate ground of hope in the out-pouring of divine love and redemption,

however faint it be, may be born in the midst of the very broken reality. Precisely through witnessing what is opposite to love and goodness, the ugly reality is implied as that which the human should strive against in his or her existence as a social being and as a believer (Thiessen 1999:275).

We often forget that the worship service has dual foci: We as believers of Christ are called not only to serve God but to serve the world as well. In such moments of viewing a political artwork, we may be reminded that we as Christians and worshippers are responsible for both the physical and spiritual wellbeing and healing of people and of creation. The beauty, truth and goodness, which are revealed in works of art by the power of their imaginative, aesthetic manifestation, may have a transformative effect on people, hence on their faith and spirituality, their aesthetic sense and morality.

Fifthly, visual art can serve as a highly eloquent mode of theological expression as the anticipatory feature inherent in art draws attention to the already-ness and not-yet-ness of the ultimate reality of God. The eschatological element is persistently encountered in paintings with a balanced perception of hope as this- and other-worldly, with its emphasis on the tension between and convergence of the now and the not yet. In a painting like *Guernica* or *Soft construction with boiled beans: Premonition of civil war* with their overwhelming sense of darkness and death, a glimmer of hope, a ray of light, a hint that death is not the ultimate end is manifested. It is hope in the midst of bleak reality, presence and absence, the mystery and beauty of creation, the ultimate triumph of (eternal) life over death, redemption in Christ, and (ultimate) truth which the works reveal in open, or imply in hidden, fashion (Thiessen 1999:279).

While art and imagery play their part in revealing something of God, participating God's transformative action, and envisioning what may, could and will be – in short, picturing the possible anticipating the beauty and glory of the Kingdom of God, they function in particular in reforming, transforming or reframing of life, of perception, emotion and action. In more theological terms, it is the power of art, imagery and

symbolism which make new perceptions possible, marshal emotion and move people to action. Transformed being, glimpses of the Kingdom of God realized through justice, peace, liberation and the integrity of creation need to be envisioned, imagined. Without reframed vision, without imagination of hope, reformation and transformation are unthinkable.

## **6.2. Conclusions**

This research has shown both from the wide reflection on aesthetics and through the particular works of art, that images can be relevant and challenging sources in and of theology and worship. For that reason, the question of theological engagement with art, the role and importance of and the convergences between the artistic and the religious imagination, and a deepened reflection on the emerging theological aspects in the works of art, have been explored as principal concerns in this study. What is fundamental to a liturgical theology of and through art, just as to other theological approaches, is the conviction that theology must also be radically based in and draw its inspiration from life, from the experience of people. During the course of this study, images have been not only discovered as such sources of theology, but moreover, parallels, convergences and mutual illumination between the image and the word have been discussed. Art, unlike traditional theological writing and explanation, may be less defined, unsystematic, more visionary, imaginative and metaphorical in character. Yet, the image can be intensely direct, shocking, and even confrontational as a result of its visual immediacy, the freedom of the artist's imagination and expression. As significant correspondences between worship and art have been revealed, some final remarks are appropriate as follows.

### **6.2.1. Worship as an art**

An encounter with God indeed can be a breathtaking and ineffable experience. Then, in such, it is through images and symbols that we reach the depths of communion with the mysterious God and give expression to it. Even though language is a powerful mode of human communication and a highly useful tool, there are certain areas and moments in which words fail to express. For example, how can we speak of the joy of salvation, one's gratitude for grace, a sense of wonder at the incarnation,

one's guilt over being sinful, the shame of the crucifixion, or the peace that passes all understanding? How can we speak of life's circumstances as they are experienced within and addressed by faith in Christ – the death of a parent, the birth of a child, the dawning of spring, the discovery of an illness, or the association of friends? Further, how can we speak to God in public prayer of a worshipping assembly's heartfelt needs? How can we put into words their fears, longings, gladness, remorse, pain, or praise? In those times words fail us and we are left in a state beyond words (Schmit 2002:6-7).

If worship is truly successful at engendering the divine encounter, then worship, as it consists of various symbols and forms of expression, is an art – a performative artful symbolic action (Saliers 1999:15). Here one (possibly a Protestant) might argue that worship has to be a place for nothing other than proclaiming the plain and simple truth received from the Bible and it has nothing to do with art. Yet, as Brown (1989:40) has reported, artistic symbolism is already incorporated in much of Protestant liturgy and many of Protestant worship spaces. Aesthetic factors are involved even in Free Church Protestantism where the relatively unceremonious style of worship with pulpit rhetoric has an aesthetic rhythm and impact of its own.

Worship needs to be artful and beautiful in order to enable the dialogue between God and believers.<sup>83</sup> Because worship as a form of art has the power to give expression to the ineffable elements of subjective experience and to deal with the profound matters of faith and life, preachers and worship leaders need to be aware of the artistic responsibility that is associated with their roles. Worship failing beauty and art runs the risk of an impoverishment in individual, communal and churchly life – alienation from nature, bodily asceticism, legalism and literalism (Cf. Farley 2001:108-110). Conversely, when worship is performed artistically and beautifully, it effectively amplifies people's perceptions to God, others and the community, reaching their beings and experiences. Therefore, the sense of artistic responsibility that accrues to worship leaders and preachers is suggested forcefully by Kavanagh

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<sup>83</sup> Here it does not mean a 'tamed and innocuous' beauty. Note again what I have discussed about the concepts and features of art/beauty in this study.

(1990:54-55):

As does any art form, the liturgy gives enlarged room for imagination, for investment in and appropriation of values and for freedom. The difference between a liturgy which does this and one which does not is the difference between art and propaganda, between creation and exploitation.

Artistically responsible worship is not merely for aesthetic pleasure. It is for the sake of God's people. It is to open their hearts as well as their minds; to touch them deeply, to strengthen their faith, and to evoke a transformation in their lives.

### **6.2.2. Image and word**

In all our efforts to truly see and to treat and acknowledge the work of art as a liturgical theological locus, it is vital to be aware of the mutual dependence of verbal and visual modes of religious expression. Word cannot be disengaged from image, or should not be valued as a better or clearer communicative device than image. Both word and image are partners in the meaning-making in a culture or in a religious faith (Cf. Jensen 2000:6).

Word and image are not necessarily in conflict, but the Korean Presbyterian churches in general (or the Reformed churches, to speak broadly) are suspicious of visual art and imagery on account of the probable risk of idolatry, or in extreme, label them as idols. Hence, it is true that they feel uneasy about the crucifix hung in the worship space. Nevertheless, on the other hand, we can easily find the counter-fact that images of the crucifix are being used in other forms in the Korean Presbyterian churches – in banners, bulletins, handouts and the like. For practical reasons and cases, images are being utilized in contradiction to the stand of the churches. Images are truly insuppressible, indestructible human activity.

According to the traditional interpretation of the second commandment, it is supposed, in order to obey the spirit of this commandment, that the faithful must be on guard against the misuse of images for evil purposes. Unfortunately, however,

this negative emphasis has given rise to the preclusion of images from being a communicative means of truth and goodness of God (especially in the Protestant group); and instead, the power of the word has often been exaggerated (Brown 1999:329). Then again, in response to the suspicion and objection to images, it should be highlighted that anything can be idolized and possibly employed for similarly sinful purposes. The danger of idolatry applies to word and concept (including those used in the Scriptures) as much as it does to other forms of representation. Simply consider an instance that conceptualization or verbalization of God's truth and revelation in rigid dogmatism has straight-jacketed and fossilized the faith and estranged us from the vivid encounter with God. As Miles (1985:5) observes, the scriptural texts that caution against illegitimate attachment to images does not urge the rejection of all images. "Rather, the texts indicate an awareness that a powerful tool is always double-edged, capable equally of providing valuable help and of promoting addiction to the tool itself".

The work of our eyes, biblically speaking, is a serious business because of its power. As shown in the account at the very beginning of Genesis that the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant (*hamad*) to the sight and good for food (Gen. 2:9), and in the third chapter when a parallel phrase appears in the temptation narrative: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes ... she took of its fruit" (Gen. 3:6), the power, or charm of the visual, and its influence, either eliciting praise to God or leading one away from God is acknowledged implicitly, but evidently. Therefore, to see art and the experience of beauty (or ugliness) as incidental to life is to ignore the power that the visual exerts on people. If we trivialize art, then it is a failure in appreciating the power that our exposure to art inevitably wields, and as a result, we overlook a vital area of potential Christian growth and witness (Dyrness 2001:140-141).

A fruitful relationship between image and word, or seeing and listening is possibly conceived from the fact that the Bible is both a book of words and a book of images. The Bible is God's Word obviously, but along with this dimension: The scriptures consist of narratives and signs, parables and metaphors, symbolic languages, which God uses to communicate with the people in human categories. The Scripture is



very much a composite of many imaginative languages, and these images are the Word of God. Therefore, on the premise of this comprehensive understanding of the Word of God, listening to the Word and the viewing of images are claimed to be one and the same. The believer sees God in listening to his Word, and he/she hears God while looking at the world through the glasses of the Word of God, as Calvin claimed.

Images and words are closely connected anthropologically, given that the human perception or experience consists in its entirety. Art, imagery and symbolism carry great weight because they contribute substantially to the corporate experience by virtue of their aesthetic strengths. Because of its sensuous nature, its color and lines and especially because of its immediacy, art brings about a corporate experience arising from the depths of the human being, i.e. one's emotion and intellect as well as the body and senses. Art can, indeed, creatively transcend dualisms through its power to connect, to juxtapose and hold in creative unity the body and mind, nature and grace, immanence and transcendence, the sacred and the secular, bringing together what otherwise may be regarded as disjointed or irreconcilable.

Yet, in spite of all our undertakings to integrate images and words into a comprehensive whole, we need to be attentive to the tension that exists between the artistic image and the written word. The tension lies in the very fact that a work of art cannot be translated entirely into words. If one was to try such a translation, the unique aspect of the work of art would be lost. However, it is precisely this tension that provides the ground for and gives life to art/images. Despite the uniqueness of visual art, interpretation of works of art is necessary in order to bring out the message contained in the works more clearly (Thiessen 2003:858). The tension in this sense, then, is not negative, and distinction does not mean separation. "As long as the written word and the visual work of art can be distinguished, and as long as they *both* express reality and ultimate reality, intimate relations and infinite bridges between the two can be discovered, built and enlarged" (Thiessen 1999:283). It is in this way that a theology based on images takes its place in our reflection on the divine, in our search for meaning, in our worship seeking to see God.

Therefore, in advocating a theology of art, I claim that we need to do theology and therewith worship, trying out new media, images and metaphors, though there might be a risk, namely the risk of abuse of images. Theology/worship, which risks trying out new and challenging artworks, images and symbols, is naturally less prone to ending up in abuses or non-sense because sincerity and responsibility prevails in such tries. It is here that glimpses of the beauty, goodness and truth of God emerge, that the rational and the sentient are integrated in the search for God who is mystery. In this adventure, our theology/worship can become exciting and remain relevant to peoples' lives, as it is inclusive, open to transformation, to alternative possibility – the possibility to imagine in new ways the present future.

### **6.3. Contributions**

I believe that this research contributes on the following points: Firstly, this research has proved the importance of the visual in theological perspective as well as in historical viewpoint. For several theological reasons, art/aesthetics is a subject that should not be neglected or avoided in theological enterprise. It is not only a critical locus of theology, but a graceful partner of theological dialogue. This is also manifested vividly by the historical, archaeological evidence that visual art and images were an essential part of the life of the Christian church and its worship from the very beginning, or even from the beginning of human history.

Secondly, this research has shown that art, imagery and symbolism would be a meaningful help and remedy specifically to the Korean Presbyterian context. This research, offering an opportunity for the Korean Presbyterian churches to be introduced with art/aesthetics that might be new to them, can be a reminder that some qualities of aesthetic expressions have significant implications to their problematic sermon-driven worship. This research, thereby, can also be a challenge for them to revisit the use of imaginative artworks and symbols in their liturgy.

### **6.4. Future research**

Despite all the efforts of mine to appropriate visual art and beauty for the worship in

the Korean Presbyterian churches, this study has some limits. Therefore, I would like to suggest potential avenues for further inquiry as follows.

Firstly, I believe it would be valuable to follow up this study with research on what kind of art, or which work of art should be used concretely. This may be a question of taste, or may be about the criterion of what makes a work of art religiously meaningful and significant. Although the matter of taste or the criterion of good art, of course, does not exist without the risk of ambiguity, an argument that the criteria of good art should coincide with, or at least take account of, the criteria of good religion seems to be indisputable since the aesthetic and the religious are often intrinsically intertwined. Despite possible errors and misunderstandings, the church must remain committed to use good art in order to help reshaping and reframing of the lives of people and the community in terms of the redemptive beauty of God.

Secondly, I also believe it would be valuable to focus in a research project on church architecture. Worship space itself holds a theological importance because it functions as a liminal border between the sacred and the secular in the worshiper's mind. It bears sacredness, not because the building is sacred itself, but because the holy people of God abide in it and the holy acts of Sacraments and worship are conducted in it. Nevertheless, the construction of worship spaces of the Korean Presbyterian churches is mostly governed by consumerist ideology: The church buildings are renovated more like a café or cinema, and visitors and believers are transformed in those spaces into consumers of religious products, who want to get service done to them. In this circumstance, a research of constructing a theologically meaningful environment for worship is required.

Thirdly, a more profound research for the effect that aesthetic media have specifically on our emotions and feelings would be a meaningful try to do. As the affective dimension – mood, emotions and feelings – is an essential constituent of being human, the affective-cognitive impact of art/aesthetics needs to be explored with gravity.

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